

Gives Sorrow to the
Winds


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sagacious eve had not passed back and forth many times between the mother and daughter before he saw how it was. He made no remark upon it, however, but continued for some moments a pleasant chatty conversation which he had begun with Mr. Monigomer; he then called Ellen to him—he had rather taken a fancy to her.

“Well, Mr. Ellen,” he said, rubbing one of her hands in his, “what do you think of this fine scheme of mine?”

“What scheme, sir?”

“Why, this scheme of sending this sick lady over the water to get well. What do you think of it, eh?”

“Will it make her quite well, do you think, sir?” asked Ellen, earnestly.

“‘Will it make her well’ to be sure it will. Do you think I don’t know better than to send people all the way across the ocean for nothing? Who do you think would want Dr. Green if he sent people on wild goose-chases in that fashion?”

“Will she have to stay long there before she is cured, sir?” asked Ellen.

“Oh, that I can’t tell—that depends entirely on circumstances—perhaps longer, perhaps shorter. But now, Miss Ellen, I’ve got a word of business to say to you. You know you agreed to be my little nurse. Mrs. Nurse, this lady whom I put under your care the other day isn’t quite as well as she ought to be this morning; I am afraid you haven’t taken proper care of her—she looks to me as if she had been too much excited. I’ve a notion she has been secretly taking half a bottle of wine or reading some furious kind of a novel, or something of that sort—you understand. Now mind, Mrs. Nurse,” said the doctor, changing his tone, “she *must not* be excited; you must take care that she is not—it isn’t good for her. You mustn’t let her talk much or laugh much, or cry at all, on any account; she mustn’t be worried in the least—will you remember? Now you know what I shall expect of you, you must be very careful—if that piece of toast of yours should chance to get burned, one of these fine evenings, I won’t answer for the consequences. ‘Good bye,’” said he, shaking Ellen’s hand, “you needn’t look sober about it—all you have to do is to let your mamma be as much like an oyster as possible—you understand?” ‘Good bye.’ And Dr. Green took his leave.

‘Poor woman,’ said the doctor to himself as he went downstairs (he was a humane man). ‘I wonder if she’ll live till she gets to the other side! That’s a nice little girl, too. Poor child! poor child!’

Both mother and daughter silently acknowledged the justice of the doctor's advice, and determined to follow it. By common consent, as it seemed, each for several days avoided bringing the subject of sorrow to the other's mind, though no doubt it was constantly present to both. It was not spoken of indeed, little of any kind was spoken of, but that never Mrs. Montgomery was doubtless employed during this interval in preparing for what she believed was before her, endeavouring to resign herself and her child to Him in whose hands they were, and struggling to withdraw her affections from a world which she had a secret misgiving she was fast leaving. As for Ellen, the doctor's warning had served to strengthen the resolve she had already made, that she would not distress her mother with the sight of her sorrow, and she kept it, as far as she could. She did not let her mother see but very few tears, and those were quiet ones, though she drooped her head like a withered flower, and went about the house with an air of submissive sadness that tried her mother sorely. But when she was alone, and knew no one could see, sorrow had its way, and then there were sometimes agonies of grief that would almost have broken Mrs. Montgomery's resolution had she known them.

This, however, could not last. Ellen was a child, and of most buoyant and elastic spirit naturally. It was not for one sorrow, however great, to utterly crush her. It would have taken years to do that. Moreover, she entertained not the slightest hope of being able by any means to alter her father's will. She regarded the dreaded evil as an inevitable thing. But though she was at first overwhelmed with sorrow, and for some days evidently pined under it sadly, hope at length *would* come back to her little heart; and no sooner in again hope began to smooth the roughest, and soften the hardest, and touch the dark spots with light, in Ellen's future. The thoughts which had passed through her head that first morning as she had stood at her window, now came back again. Thoughts of wonderful improvement to be made during her mother's absence; of unheard-of efforts to learn and amuse, which should all be crowned with success, and, above all, thoughts of that "coming home," when all these attainments and accomplishments should be displayed to the mother's delighted eyes, and her exertions receive their long desired reward; they made Ellen's heart beat, and her eyes swim, and even brought a smile once more upon her lips. Mrs. Montgomery was rejoiced to see the change; she felt that as much time had already been given to sorrow as they could afford to lose, and she had not

known exactly how to proceed. Ellen's amended looks and spirits greatly relieved her.

"What are you thinking about, Ellen?" said she, one morning.

Ellen was sewing, and while busy at her work her mother had two or three times observed a light smile pass over her face. Ellen looked up, still smiling, and answered, "O, mamma, I was thinking of different things—things that I mean to do while you are gone."

"And what are these things?" enquired the mother.

"O, mamma, it wouldn't do to tell you beforehand; I want to surprise you with them when you come back."

A slight shudder passed over Mrs. Montgomery's frame, but Ellen did not see it. Mrs. Montgomery was silent. Ellen presently introduced another subject.

"Mamma, what kind of a person is my aunt?"

"I do not know; I have never seen her."

"How has that happened, mamma?"

"Your aunt has always lived in a remote country town, and I have been very much confined to two or three cities, and your father's long and repeated absences made travelling impossible to me."

Ellen thought, but she didn't say it, that it was very odd her father should not sometimes, when he *was* in the country, have gone to see his relations, and taken her mother with him.

"What is my aunt's name, mamma?"

"I think you must have heard that already, Ellen; Fortune Emerson."

"Emerson! I thought she was papa's sister!"

"So she is."

"Then how comes her name not to be Montgomery?"

"She is only his half-sister; the daughter of his mother, not the daughter of his father."

"I am very sorry for that," said Ellen, gravely.

"Why, my daughter?"

"I am afraid she will not be so likely to love me!"

"You mustn't think so, my child. Her loving or not loving you will depend solely and entirely upon yourself, Ellen. Don't forget that. If you are a good child, and make it your daily care to do your duty, she cannot help liking you, be she what she may; and on the other hand, if she have all the will in the world to love you, she cannot do it unless you will let her—it all depends on your behaviour."

"Oh, mamma, I cannot help wishing dear Aunt Bessy was alive, and I was going to her."

Many a time the same wish had passed through Mrs. Montgomery's mind ! But she kept down her rising heart, and went on calmly—

"You must not expect, my child, to find anybody as indulgent as I am, or as ready to overlook and excuse your faults. It would be unreasonable to look for it ; and you must not think hardly of your aunt when you find she is not your mother ; but then it will be your own fault if she does not love you, in time, truly and tenderly. See that you render her all the respect and obedience you could render me ; that is your bounden duty ; she will stand in my place while she has the care of you—remember that, Ellen ; and remember, too, that she will deserve more gratitude at your hands for showing you kindness than I do, because she cannot have the same feeling of love to make trouble easy."

"Oh no, mamma," said Ellen, "I don't think so ; it's that very feeling of love that I am grateful for ; I don't care a fig for anything people do for me without that."

"But you can make her love you, Ellen, if you try."

"Well, I'll try, mamma."

"And don't be discouraged. Perhaps you may be disappointed in first appearances, but never mind that ; have patience, and let your motto be (if there's any occasion), overcome evil with good. Will you put that among the things you mean to do while I am gone?" said Mrs. Montgomery with a smile.

"I'll try, dear mamma."

"You will succeed if you try, dear, never fear ; if you apply yourself in your trying to the only unfailing source of wisdom and strength ; to Him without whom you can do nothing."

There was silence for a little.

"What sort of a place is it where my aunt lives?" asked Ellen.

"Your father says it is a very pleasant place ; he says the country is beautiful, and very healthy, and full of charming walks and rides. You have never lived in the country ; I think you will enjoy it very much."

"Then it is not in a town?" said Ellen.

"No ; it is not a great way from the town of Thirwall, but your aunt lives in the open country. Your father says she is a capital house-keeper, and that you will learn more, and be in all respects a great deal happier and better off than you would be in a boarding-school here or anywhere."

Ellen's heart secretly questioned the truth of this last assertion very much.

"Is there any school near?" she asked.

"You, father says there was an excellent one in Thirlwall when he was there."

"Mamma," said Ellen, "I think the greatest pleasure I shall have while you are gone will be writing to you. I have been thinking of it a good deal. I mean to tell you everything—absolutely everything, mamma. You know there will be nobody for me to talk to as I do to you," Ellen's words came out with difficulty; "and when I feel badly, I shall just shut myself up and write to you." She hid her face in her mother's lap.

"I count upon it, my dear daughter, it will make quite as much the pleasure of my life, Ellen, as of yours."

"But then, mother," said Ellen, brushing away the tears from her eyes, "it will be so long before my letters can get to you! The things I want you to know right away, you won't know perhaps in a month."

"That's no matter, daughter, they will be just as good when they do get to me. Never think of that. Write every day, and of all manner of things that concern you,—just as particularly as if you were speaking to me."

"And you'll write to me, too, mamma?"

"Indeed I will—when I can. But, Ellen, you say that when I am away and cannot hear you, there will be nobody to supply my place. Perhaps it will be so indeed, but then, my daughter, let it make you seek that Friend who is never far away, nor out of hearing. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. You know what He has said of His children. 'Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

"But, mamma," said Ellen, her eyes filling instantly,—"*you know He is not my friend in the same way that He is yours.*" And hiding her face again, she added, "Oh, I wish He was!"

"You know the way to make Him so, Ellen. *He is willing, it only rests with you.* O, my child, my child! if losing your mother might be the means of finding you that Better Friend, I should be quite willing—and glad to go—for ever."

There was silence, only broken by Ellen's sobs. Mrs Montgomery's voice had trembled, and her face was now covered with her hands; but she was not weeping; she was seeking a better relief where it had long been her habit to seek and find it. Both resumed their usual composure, and the employments which had been broken off, but neither chose to renew the conversation. Dinner, sleeping, and company, prevented their having another opportunity during the rest of the day.

But when evening came, they were again left to themselves. Captain Montgomery was away, which indeed was the case most of the time; friends had taken their departure; the curtains were down, the lamplit, the little room looked cosy and comfortable; the servant had brought the tea-things, and withdrawn, and the mother and daughter were happily alone. Mrs. Montgomery knew that such occasions were numbered, and fast drawing to an end, and she felt each one to be very precious. She now lay on her couch, with her face partially shaded, and her eyes fixed upon her little daughter, who was now preparing the tea. She watched her, with thoughts and feelings not to be spoken, as the little figure went back and forward between the table and the fire, and the light shining full upon her busy face, showed that Ellen's whole soul was in her beloved duty. Tears would fall as she looked, and were not wiped away; but when Ellen, having finished her work, brought with a satisfied face the little tray of tea and toast to her mother, there was no longer any sign of them left. Mrs. Montgomery arose with her usual kind smile, to show her gratitude by honouring as far as possible what Ellen had provided.

"You have more appetite to-night, mamma."

"I am very glad, my daughter," replied her mother, "to see that you have made up your mind to bear patiently this evil that has come upon us. I am glad for your sake, and I am glad for mine; and I am glad too, because we have a great deal to do and no time to lose in doing it."

"What have we so much to do, mamma?" said Ellen.

"O, many things," said her mother, "you will see. But now, Ellen, if there is anything you wish to talk to me about, any question you want to ask, anything that you would like particularly to have, or to have done for you—I want you to tell it me as soon as possible, now while we can attend to it—for by-and-by perhaps we shall be hurried."

"Mamma," said Ellen with brightening eyes, "there is one thing I have thought of that I should like to have—shall I tell it you now?"

"Yes."

"Mamma, you know I shall want to be writing a great deal—wouldn't it be a good thing for me to have a little box with some pens in it, and an inkstand, and some paper and wafers? Because, mamma, you know I shall be among strangers, at first, and I shan't be asking them for these things as often as I shall want them, and they wouldn't want to let me have them if I did."

"I have thought of that already, daughter," said Mrs. Montgomery, with a smile and a sigh. "I will certainly take care that you are well provided in that respect before you go."

"How am I to go, mamma?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, who will go with me? You know I can't go alone, mamma."

"No, my daughter, I'll not send you alone. But your father says it is impossible for *him* to take that journey at present, and it is yet more impossible for me. There is no help for it, daughter, but we must entrust you to the care of some friend going that way; but He that holds the winds and waters in the hollow of His hand can take care of you without any of our help, and it is to His keeping above all that I shall commit you."

Ellen made no remark, and seemed much less surprised and troubled than her mother had expected. In truth, the greater evil swallowed up the less. Parting from her mother, and for so long a time, it seemed to her comparatively a matter of little importance with whom she went, or how, or where. Except for this the taking a long journey under a stranger's care would have been a dreadful thing to her.

"Do you know yet who it will be that I shall go with, mamma?"

"Not yet; but it will be necessary to take the first good opportunity, for I cannot go till I have seen you off; and it is thought very desirable that I should get to sea before the severe weather comes."

It was with a pang that these words were spoken, and heard, but neither showed it to the other.

"It has comforted me greatly, my dear child, that you have shown yourself so submissive and patient under this affliction. I should scarcely have been able to endure it if you had not exerted self-control. You have behaved beautifully."

This was almost too much for poor Ellen. It required her utmost stretch of self-control to keep within any bounds of composure; and for some moments her flushed cheek, quivering lip, and heaving bosom told what a tumult her mother's last words had raised. Mrs. Montgomery saw she had gone too far, and willing to give both Ellen and herself time to recover, she laid her head on the pillow again and closed her eyes. Many thoughts coming thick upon one another presently filled her mind, and half an hour had passed before she again recollected what she had meant to say. She opened her eyes;

Ellen was sitting at a little distance, staring into the fire ; evidently as deep in meditation as her mother had been.

"Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, "did you ever fancy what kind of a Bible you would like to have?"

"A Bible, mamma!" said Ellen, with sparkling eyes, "do you mean to give me a Bible?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled.

"But, mamma," said Ellen, "I thought you couldn't afford it?"

"I have said so, and truly," answered her mother, "and hitherto you have been able to use mine, but I will not leave you now without one. I will find ways and means," said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling again.

"O, mamma, thank you!" said Ellen, delighted; "how glad I shall be!" And, after a pause of consideration she added, "Mamma, I never thought much about what sort of a one I should like; couldn't I tell better if I were to see the different kinds in the store?"

"Perhaps so. Well, the first day that the weather is fine enough and I am well enough, I will go out with you, and we will see about it."

"I am afraid Dr. Green won't let you, mamma."

"I shall not ask him. I want to get you a Bible, and some other things that I will not leave you without, and nobody can do it but myself. I shall go if I possibly can."

"What other things, mamma?" asked Ellen, very much interested.

"I don't think it will do to tell you to-night," said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling. "I foresee that you and I should be kept awake quite too late if we were to enter upon it just now. We will leave it till to-morrow. Now read to me, love, and then to bed."

Ellen obeyed; and went to sleep, with brighter visions dancing before her eyes than had been the case for some time.

CHAPTER III.

THE WORTH OF A FINGER-RING.

ELLEN had to wait some time for the desired fine day. The equinoctial storms would have their way as usual, and Ellen thought they were longer than ever this year. But after many stormy days had tried her patience, there was at length a sudden change both without and within doors. The clouds had done their work for that time, and fled away before a strong northerly wind, leaving the sky bright and

fair. And Mrs. Montgomery's deceitful disease took a turn, and for a little space raised the hopes of her friends. All were rejoicing but two persons: Mrs. Montgomery was not deceived, neither was the doctor. The shopping project was kept a profound secret from him and from everybody except Ellen.

Ellen watched now for a favourable day. Every morning as soon as she rose she went to the window to see what was the look of the weather; and about a week after the change above noticed, she was greatly pleased one morning, on opening her window as usual, to find the air and sky promising all that could be desired. It was one of those beautiful days in the end of September, that sometimes herald October before it arrives,—cloudless, brilliant, and breathing balm. "This will do," said Ellen to herself, in great satisfaction. "I think this will do; I hope mamma will think so."

Hastily dressing herself, and a good deal excited already, she ran downstairs; and after the morning salutations, examined her mother's looks with as much anxiety as she had just done those of the weather. All was satisfactory there also; and Ellen ate her breakfast with an excellent appetite; but she said not a word of the intended expedition till her father should be gone. She contented herself with strengthening her hopes by making constant fresh inspections of the weather and her mother's countenance alternately; and her eyes returning from the window on one of these excursions and meeting her mother's face, saw a smile there which said all she wanted. Breakfast went off more vigorously than ever. But after breakfast it seemed to Ellen that her father never would go away. He took the newspaper, an uncommon thing for him, and pored over it most perseveringly, while Ellen was in a perfect fidget of impatience. Her mother, seeing the state she was in, and taking pity on her, sent her upstairs to do some little matters of business in her own room. These Ellen despatched with all possible zeal and speed; and coming down again found her father gone and her mother alone. She flew to kiss her in the first place, and then made the enquiry, "Don't you think to-day will do, mamma?"

"As fine as possible, Ellen; we could not have a better; but I must wait till the doctor has been here."

"Mamma," said Ellen, after a pause, making a great effort of self-denial, "I am afraid you oughtn't to go out to get these things for me. Pray don't, mamma, if you think it will do you harm. I would rather go without them; indeed I would."

"Never mind that, Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, kissing her.

"I am bent upon it; it would be quite as much of a disappointment to me as to you not to go. We have a lovely day for it, and we will take our time and walk slowly, and we haven't far to go either. But I must let Dr. Green make his visit first."

To fill up the time till he came Mrs. Montgomery employed Ellen in reading to her as usual. And this morning's reading Ellen long after remembered. Her mother directed her to several passages in different parts of the Bible that speak of heaven and its enjoyments, and though, when she began, her own little heart was full of excitement, in view of the day's plans, and beating with hope and pleasure, the sublime beauty of the words and thoughts, as she went on, awed her into quiet, and her mother's manner at length turned her attention entirely to herself. Mrs. Montgomery was lying on the sofa, and for the most part listened in silence, with her eyes closed, but sometimes saying a word or two that made Ellen feel how deep was the interest her mother had in the things she read of, and how pure and strong the pleasure she was even now taking in them, and sometimes there was a smile on her face that Ellen scarcely liked to see, it gave her an indistinct feeling that her mother would not be long away from that heaven to which she seemed already to belong. Ellen had said consciously, too, that she had no part with her mother in this matter. She could hardly go on. She came to that beautiful passage in the seventh of Revelation.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

With difficulty, and a husky voice, Ellen got through it. Lifting then her eyes to her mother's face, she saw again the same singularly sweet smile. Ellen felt that she could not read another word; to her great relief the door opened, and Dr. Green came in. His appearance changed the whole course of her thoughts. All that was grave or painful fled quickly away; Ellen's head was immediately full again of what had filled it before she began to read.

• As soon as the doctor had retired and was fairly out of hearing, "Now, mamma, shall we go?" said Ellen. "You needn't stir, mamma; I'll bring all your things to you, and put them on; may I, mamma? then you won't be a bit tired before you set out."

Her mother assented; and with a great deal of tenderness and a great deal of eagerness, Ellen put on her stockings and shoes, arranged her hair, and did all that she could toward changing her dress, and putting on her bonnet and shawl; and greatly delighted she was when the business was accomplished.

• "Now, mamma, you look like yourself; I haven't seen you look so well this great while. I'm so glad you're going out again," said Ellen, putting her arms round her; "I do believe it will do you good. Now, mamma, I'll go and get ready; I'll be very quick about it; you shan't have to wait long for me."

• In a few minutes the two set forth from the house. The day was as fine as could be; there was no wind, there was no dust; the sun was not oppressive, and Mrs. Montgomery did feel refreshed and strengthened during the few steps they had to take to their first stopping-place.

It was a jeweller's store. Ellen had never been in one before in her life, and her first feeling on entering was of dazzled wonderment at the glittering splendours around; this was presently forgotten in curiosity to know what her mother could possibly want there. She soon discovered that she had come to sell and not to buy. Mrs. Montgomery drew a ring from her finger, and after a little chaffering parted with it to the owner of the store for eighty dollars, being about three-quarters of its real value. The money was counted out, and she left the store.

• "Mamma," said Ellen in a low voice, "wasn't that grandmamma's ring, which I thought you loved so much?"

"Yes, I did love it, Ellen, but I love you better."

"O, mamma, I am very sorry!" said Ellen.

"You need not be sorry, my dear. Jewels in themselves are the merest nothings to me; and as for the rest, it doesn't matter; I can remember my mother without any help from a trinket."

There were tears, however, in Mrs. Montgomery's eyes, that showed the sacrifice had cost her something; and there were tears in Ellen's that told it was not thrown away upon her.

• "I am sorry you should know of this," continued Mrs. Montgomery; "you should not if I could have helped it. But set your heart quite at rest, Ellen; I assure you the use of my ring gives me more pleasure on the whole than any other I could have made of it."

A grateful squeeze of her hand and glance into her face was Ellen's answer.

Mrs. Montgomery had applied to her husband for the funds necessary to fit Ellen comfortably for the time they should be absent ; and in answer he had given her a sum barely sufficient for mere clothing. Mrs. Montgomery knew him better than to ask for a further supply, but she resolved to have recourse to other means to do what she had determined upon. Now that she was about to leave her little daughter, and it might be for ever, she had set her heart upon providing her with certain things which she thought important to her comfort and improvement, and which Ellen would go very long without if *she* did not give them to her, and *now* Ellen had had very few presents in her life, and those always of the simplest and cheapest kind ; her mother resolved that in the midst of the bitterness of this time she would give her one pleasure, if she could ; it might be the last.

They stopped next at a book-store. "Oh, what a delicious smell of new books!" said Ellen, as they entered. "Mamma, if it wasn't for one thing, I should say I never was so happy in my life."

Children's books, lying in tempting confusion near the door, immediately fastened Ellen's eyes and attention. She opened one, and was already deep in the interest of it, when the word "*Bibles*" struck her ear. Mrs. Montgomery was desiring the shopman to show her various kinds and sizes that she might choose from among them. Down went Ellen's book, and she flew to the place where a dozen different Bibles were presently displayed. Ellen's wits were ready to forsake her. Such beautiful Bibles she had never seen ; she pored in ecstasy over their varieties of type and binding, and was very evidently in love with them all.

"Now, Ellen," said Mrs. Montgomery, "look and choose ; take your time, and see which you like best."

It was not likely that "Ellen's time" would be a short one. Her mother seeing this, took a chair at a little distance to await patiently her decision ; and while Ellen's eyes were riveted on the Bibles, her own very naturally were fixed upon her. In the excitement and eagerness of the moment, Ellen had thrown off her light bonnet, and with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, and a brow grave with unusual care, as though a nation's fate were deciding, she was weighing the comparative advantages of large, small, and middle sized ;—black, blue purple, and red ;—gilt and not gilt ;—clasp and no clasp. Everything but the Bibles before her Ellen had forgotten utterly ; she was deep in what was to her the most important of business ; she did not see the

bystanders smile; she did not know there were any. To her mother's eye it was a most fair sight. Miss Montgomery gazed with rising emotions of pleasure and pain that struggled for the mastery; but pain at last got the better and rose very high. "How can I give thee up!" was the one thought of her heart. Unable to command herself, she rose and went to a distant part of the counter, where she seemed to be examining books, but tears, some of the bitterest she had ever shed, were falling thick upon the dusty floor, and she felt her heart like to break. Her little daughter at one end of the counter had forgotten there ever was such a thing as sorrow in the world, and she at the other was bowed beneath a weight of it that was nigh to crush her. But in her extremity she betook herself to that refuge she had never known to fail, it did not fail her now. She remembered the words Ellen had been reading to her that very morning, and they came like the breath of heaven upon the fever of her soul. "Not my will, but Thine be done." She strove and prayed to say it, and not in vain; and after a little while she was able to return to her seat. She felt that she had been shaken by a tempest, but she was calmer now than before.

Ellen was just as she had left her, and apparently just as far from coming to any conclusion. Miss Montgomery was resolved to let her take her way. Presently Ellen came over from the counter with a large royal octavo Bible, heavy enough to be a good lift for her.

"Mamma," she said, "giving it on her mother's lap and opening it, "what do you think of that? isn't it splendid?"

"A most splendid page indeed, is this your choice, Ellen?"

"Well, mamma, I don't know; what do you think?"

"I think it is rather inconveniently large and heavy for every day use. It is quite a weight upon my lip. I shouldn't like to carry it in my hands long. You would want a little table on purpose to hold it."

"Well, that wouldn't do at all," said Ellen, laughing; "I believe you are right, mamma, I wonder I didn't think of it. I might have known that myself."

She took it back, and there followed another careful examination of the whole stock, and then Ellen came to her mother with a beautiful miniature edition in two volumes, gilt and clasped, and very perfect in all respects, but of exceedingly small print.

"I think I'll have this, mamma," said she. "Isn't it a beauty? I could put it in my pocket, you know, and carry it anywhere with the greatest ease."

"It would have one great objection to me," said Mrs. Montgomery, "inasmuch as I cannot possibly see to read it."

"Cannot you, mamma! But I can read it perfectly."

"Well, my dear, take it; that is, if you will make up your mind to put on spectacles before your time."

"Spectacles, mamma! I hope I shall never have to wear spectacles."

"What do you propose to do when your sight fails, if you shall live so long?"

"Well, mamma, if it comes to that, but you don't advise me then to take this little beauty?"

"Judge for yourself, I think you are old enough."

"I know what you think, though, mamma, and I dare say you are right, too, I won't take it, though it's a pity. Well, I must look again."

Mrs. Montgomery came to her help, for it was plain Ellen had lost the power of judging amidst so many tempting objects. But she presently simplified the matter by putting aside all that were decidedly too large, or too small, or too fine print. There remained three, of moderate size and sufficiently large type, but different binding.

"Either of these, I think, will answer your purpose nicely," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Then, mamma, if you please, I will have the red one. I like that best, because it will put me in mind of yours."

Mrs. Montgomery could find no fault with this reason. She paid for the red Bible, and directed it to be sent home. "Shall I carry it, mamma?" said Ellen.

"No, you would find it in the way, we have several things to do yet."

"Have we, mamma? I thought we only came to get a Bible."

"That is enough for one day, I confess, I am a little afraid your head will be turned, but I must run the risk of it. I dare not lose the opportunity of this fine weather. I may not have such another. I wish to have the comfort of thinking when I am away that I have left you with everything necessary to this keeping up of good habits—everything that will make them pleasant and easy. I wish you to be always neat, and tidy, and industrious; depending on others as little as possible; and careful to improve yourself by every means, and especially by writing to me. I will leave you no excuse, Ellen, for failing in any of these duties. I trust you will not disappoint me in a single particular."

Ellen's heart was too full to speak; she again looked up tearfully and pressed her mother's hand.

"I do not expect to be disappointed, love," returned Mrs. Montgomery.

They now entered a large fancy store. "What are we to get here, mamma?" said Ellen.

"A box to put your pens and paper in," said her mother, smiling.

"Oh, to be sure," said Ellen: "I had almost forgotten that." She quite forgot it a minute after. It was the first time she had ever seen the inside of such a store; and the articles displayed on every side completely bewitched her. From one thing to another she went, admiring and wondering; in her wildest dreams she had never imagined such beautiful things. The store was fairy-land.

Mrs. Montgomery meanwhile attended to business. Having chosen a neat little japanned dressing box, perfectly plain, but well supplied with everything a child could want in that line, she called Ellen from the delightful journey of discovery she was making round the store, and asked her what she thought of it. "I think it's a little beauty," said Ellen; "but I never saw such a place for beautiful things."

"You think it will do then?" said her mother.

"For me, mamma? You don't mean to give it to me? Oh, mother, how good you are! But I know what is the best way to thank you, and I'll do it. What a perfect little beauty! Mamma, I'm too happy."

"I hope not," said her mother, "for you know I haven't got you the box for your pens and paper yet."

"Well, mamma, I'll try and bear it," said Ellen laughing. "But do get me the plainest little thing in the world, for you're giving me too much."

Mrs. Montgomery asked to look at writing-desks, and was shown to another part of the store for the purpose. "Mamma," said Ellen, in a low tone, as they went, "you're not going to get me a writing-desk?"

"Why, that is the best kind of box for holding writing materials," said her mother, smiling; "don't you think so?"

"I don't know what to say!" exclaimed Ellen. "I can't thank you, mamma;—I haven't any words to do it. I think I shall go crazy."

She was truly overcome with the weight of happiness. Words failed her, and tears came instead.

From among a great many desks of all descriptions, Mrs. Montgomery with some difficulty succeeded in choosing one to her mind.

It was of mahogany, not very large, but thoroughly well made and finished, and very convenient and perfect in its internal arrangements. Ellen was speechless; occasional looks at her mother, and deep sighs, were all she had now to offer. The desk was quite empty. "Ellen," said her mother, "do you remember the furniture of Miss Allen's desk, that you were so pleased with a while ago?"

"Perfectly, mamma: I know all that was in it."

"Well, then, you must prompt me if I forget anything. Your desk will be furnished with everything really useful. Merely showy matters we can dispense with. Now let us see. Here is a great empty place that I think wants some paper to fill it. Show me some of different sizes, if you please."

The shopman obeyed, and Mrs. Montgomery stocked the desk well with letter paper, large and small. Ellen looked on in great satisfaction. "That will do nicely," she said. "That large paper will be beautiful whenever I am writing to you, mamma, you know, and the other will do for other times, when I haven't so much to say; though I am sure I don't know who there is in the world I should ever send letters to except you."

"If there is nobody now, perhaps there will be at some future time," replied her mother. "I hope I shall not always be your only correspondent. Now what next?"

"Envelopes, mamma?"

"To be sure; I had forgotten them. Envelopes of both sizes to match."

"Because, mamma you know I might, and I certainly shall, want to write upon the fourth page of my letter, and I couldn't do it unless I had envelopes." A sufficient stock of envelopes was laid in.

"Mamma," said Ellen, "what do you think of a little note-paper?"

"Who are the notes to be written to, Ellen?" said Mrs. Montgomery, smiling.

"You needn't smile, mamma; you know, as you said, if I don't now know, perhaps I shall by-and-by. Miss Allen's desk had note-paper; that made me think of it."

"So shall yours, my daughter; while we are about it we will do the thing well. And your note-paper will keep quite safely in this nice little place provided for it, even if you should not want to use a sheet of it in half-a-dozen years."

"How nice that is!" said Ellen admiringly.

"I suppose the note-paper must have envelopes too," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"To be sure, mamma, I suppose so," said Ellen, smiling, "Miss Allen's had."

"Well now we have got all the paper we want, I think," said Mrs. Montgomery "the next thing is ink—or an inkstand, rather."

Different kinds were presented for her choice.

"O, mamma, that one won't do," said Ellen anxiously, "you know the desk will be knocking about in a trunk and the ink will run out, and spoil everything. It should be one of those that shut tight. I don't see the right kind here. The shopman brought one."

"Here, mamma, do you see?" said Ellen "it shuts with a spring, and nothing can possibly come out. do you see, mamma? You can turn it topsy-turvy."

"I see you are quite right, my dear, it seems I should get on very ill without you to advise me. Fill the inkstand if you please."

"Mamma, what shall I do when my ink is gone—that inkstand will hold but a little, you know."

"Your aunt will supply you, of course, my dear, when you are out."

"I'd rather take some of my own, by half," said Ellen.

"You could not carry a bottle of ink in your desk without great danger to everything else in it. It would not do to venture."

"We have excellent ink powder," said the shopman, "in small packages which can be very conveniently carried about. You see, mamma, there is a compartment in the desk for such things, and the ink is very easily made at any time."

"O, that will do nicely," said Ellen "that is just the thing."

"Now what is to go in this other square place opposite the inkstand?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"That is the place for the box of lights, mamma."

"What sort of lights?"

"For sealing letters, mamma, you know. They are not like your wax taper at all, they are little wax matches, that burn just long enough to seal one or two letters. Miss Allen showed me how she used them. Here were in a nice little box just like the inkstand on the outside, and there is a place to light the matches, and a place to set them in while they are burning. Here, mamma, that's it," said Ellen, as the shopman brought forth the article which she was describing, "that's it exactly, and that will just do. Now, mamma, for the wax."

"You want to seal your letter before you have written it," said Mrs. Montgomery—"we have not got the pens yet."

"That's true, mamma; let us have the pens. And some quills too, mamma?"

"Do you know how to make a pen, Ellen?"

"No, mamma, not yet; but I want to learn very much. Miss Pichegru says that every lady ought to know how to make her own pens."

"Miss Pichegru is very right; but I think you are rather too young to learn. However, we will try. Now here are steel points enough to last you a great while,—and as many quills as it is needful you should cut up for one year at least;—we haven't a pen handle yet."

"Here, mamma," said Ellen, holding out a plain ivory one,—"don't you like this? I think that it is prettier than these that are all cut and fussed, or those other gay ones either."

"I think so too, Ellen; the plainer the prettier. Now what comes next?"

"The knife, mamma, to make the pens," said Ellen, smiling.

"True, the knife. Let us see some of your best pen knives. Now, Ellen, choose. That one won't do, my dear; it should have two blades,—a large as well as a small one. You know you want to mend a pencil sometimes."

"So I do, mamma, to be sure, you're very right; here's a nice one. Now, mamma, the wax."

"There is a box full; choose your own colours." Seeing it was likely to be a work of time, Mrs. Montgomery walked away to another part of the store. When she returned Ellen had made up an assortment of the oddest colours she could find.

"I won't have any red, mamma, it is so common," she said.

"I think it is the prettiest of all," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Do you, mamma? then I will have a stick of red on purpose to seal to you with."

"And who do you intend shall have the benefit of the other colours?" enquired her mother.

"I declare, mamma," said Ellen, laughing; "I never thought of that; I am afraid they will have to go to you. You must not mind, mamma, if you get green and blue and yellow seals once in a while."

"I daresay I shall submit myself to it with a good grace," said Mrs. Montgomery. "But come, my dear, have we got all that we want? This desk has been very long in furnishing."

"You haven't given me a seal yet, mamma."

"Stab! There are a variety before you; see if you can find one you like. By the way, you cannot seal a letter, can you?"

"Not yet, mamma," said Ellen, smiling again. "That is another of the things I have got to earn."

"Then I think you had better have some wafers in the meantime."

While Ellen was picking out her seal, which took not a little time, Mrs. Montgomery laid in a good supply of wafers of all sorts; and then went on further to furnish the desk with an ivory leaf-cutter, a paper-folder, a pounce-box, a ruler, and a neat little silver pencil; also, some drawing pencils, indiarubber, and sheets of drawing-paper. She took a sad pleasure in adding everything she could think of that might be for Ellen's future use or advantage; but as with her own hands she placed in the desk one thing after another, the thought crossed her mind how Ellen would make drawings with those very pencils, on those very sheets of paper, which her eyes would never see! She turned away with a sigh, and receiving Ellen's seal from her hand, put that also in its place. Ellen had chosen one with her own name.

"Will you send these things *at once*?" said Mrs. Montgomery; "I particularly wish to have them at home as early in the day as possible."

The man promised. Mrs. Montgomery paid the bill, and she and Ellen left the store.

They walked a little way in silence.

"I cannot thank you, mamma," said Ellen.

"It is not necessary, my dear child," said Mrs. Montgomery, returning the pressure of her hand; "I know all that you would say."

There was as much sorrow as joy at that moment in the heart of the joyfullest of the two.

"Where are we going now, mamma?" said Ellen again, after a while.

"I wished and intended to have gone to St. Clair and Fleury's to get you some merino and other things; but we have been detained so long already that I think I had better go home. I feel somewhat tired."

"I am very sorry, dear mamma," said Ellen,—"I am afraid I kept you too long about that desk."

"You did not keep me, my love, any longer than I chose to be kept. But I think I will go home now, and take the chance of another fine day for the merino."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BITTER-SWEET OF LIFE.

WHEN dinner was over and the table cleared away, the mother and daughter were left, as they always loved to be, alone. It was late in the afternoon, and already somewhat dark, for clouds had gathered over the beautiful sky of the morning, and the wind rising now and then made its voice heard. Mrs. Montgomery was lying on the sofa as usual, seemingly at ease; and Ellen was sitting on a little bench before the fire, very much at her ease indeed, without any seeming about it. She smiled as she met her mother's eyes.

"You have made me very happy to-day, mamma."

"I am glad of it, my dear child. I hoped I should. I believe the whole affair has given me as much pleasure, Ellen, as it has you."

There was a pause.

"Mamma, I will take the greatest possible care of my new treasures."

"I know you will. If I had doubted it, Ellen, most assuredly I should not have given them to you, sorry as I should have been to leave you without them. So you see you have not established a character for carefulness in vain."

"And, mamma, I hope you have not given them to me in vain either. I will try to use them in the way that I know you wish me to: that will be the best way I can thank you."

"Well, I have left you no excuse, Ellen. You know fully what I wish you to do and to be; and when I am away I shall please myself with thinking that my little daughter is following her mother's wishes; I shall believe so, Ellen. You will not let me be disappointed?"

"O no, mamma," said Ellen, who was now in her mother's arms.

"Well, my child," said Mrs. Montgomery, in a lighter tone, "my gifts will serve as reminders for you if you are ever tempted to forget my lessons. If you fail to send me letters, or if those you send are not what they ought to be, I think the desk will cry shame upon you. And if you ever go an hour with a hole in your stocking, or a tear in your dress, or a string off your petticoat, I hope the sight of your work-box will make you blush."

"Work-box, mamma?"

"Yes. O, I forgot; you've not seen that."

"No, mamma; what do you mean?"

"Why, my dear, that was one of the things you most wanted, but I thought it best not to overwhelm you quite this morning; so while

you were on an exploring expedition round the store I chose and furnished one for you."

"O, mamma, mamma!" said Ellen, getting up and clasping her hands; "what shall I do? I don't know what to say; I can't say anything. Mamma, it's too much."

So it seemed, for Ellen sat down and began to cry. Her mother silently reached out a hand to her, which she squeezed and kissed with all the energy of gratitude, love, and sorrow: till gently drawn by the same hand she was placed again in her mother's arms and upon her bosom. And in that tried resting-place she lay, calmed and quieted, till the shades of afternoon deepened into evening, and evening into night, and the light of the fire was all that was left to them.

Suddenly she broke the silence.

"Mamma, what does that mean, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me'?"

"It means just what it says. If you love anybody or anything better than Jesus Christ you cannot be one of His children."

"But then, mamma," said Helen, raising her head, "how *can* I be one of His children? I do love you a great deal better; how can I help it, mamma?"

"You cannot help it, I know, my dear," said Mrs. Montgomery, with a sigh, "except by His grace who has promised to change the hearts of His people—to take away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."

"But is mine a heart of stone then, mamma, because I cannot help loving you best?"

"Not to me, dear Ellen," replied Mrs. Montgomery, pressing closer the little form that lay in her arms; "I have never found it so. But yet I know that the Lord Jesus is far, far more worthy of your affection than I am, and if your heart were not hardened by sin you would see Him so; it is only because you do not know Him that you love me better. Pray, pray, my dear child, that He would take away the power of sin, and show you Himself: that is all that is wanting."

"I will, mamma," said Ellen, tearfully. "O, mamma, what shall I do without you?"

Alas, Mrs. Montgomery's heart echoed the question; she had no answer.

"Mamma," said Ellen, after a few minutes, "can I have no true love to Him at all unless I love Him *best*?"

"I dare not say that you can," answered her mother, seriously.

"Mamma," said Ellen, after a little, again raising her head and looking her mother full in the face, as if willing to apply the severest test to this hard doctrine, and speaking with an indescribable expression, "*do you love Him better than you do me?*"

"I do indeed, my daughter," repeated Mrs. Montgomery; "that does not make my love to you the less, but the more, Ellen."

"O, mamma, mamma," said Ellen, clinging to her, "I wish you would teach me! I have only you, and I am going to lose you. What shall I do, mamma?"

With a voice that strove to be calm Mrs. Montgomery answered, "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me." And after a minute or two she added, "He who says this has promised too that He will 'gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.'"

The words fell soothingly on Ellen's ear, and the slight tremor in the voice reminded her also that her mother must not be agitated. She checked herself instantly, and soon lay as before, quiet and still on her mother's bosom, with her eyes fixed on the fire; and Mrs. Montgomery did not know that when she now and then pressed a kiss upon the forehead that lay so near her lips, it every time brought the water to Ellen's eyes and a throb to her heart. But after some half or three-quarters of an hour had passed away, a sudden knock at the door found both mother and daughter asleep; it had to be repeated once or twice before the knocker could gain attention.

"What is that, mamma?" said Ellen, starting up.

"Somebody at the door. Open it quickly, love."

Ellen did so, and found a man standing there, with his arms rather full of sundry packages.

"O, mamma, my things!" cried Ellen, clapping her hands; "here they are!"

The man placed his burden on the table, and withdrew.

"O, mamma, I am so glad they are come! Now, if I only had a light—this is my desk, I know, for it's the largest; and I think this is my dressing-box, as well as I can tell by feeling—yes, it is, here's the handle on top; and this is my dear work-box—not so big as the desk, not so little as the dressing-box. O, mamma, mayn't I ring for a light?"

There was no need, for a servant just then entered, bringing the wished-for candles, and the not-wished-for tea. Ellen was capering about in the most fantastic style, but suddenly stopped short at sight of the tea-things, and looked very grave. "Well, mamma, I'll tell

you what I'll do," she said, after a pause of consideration; "I'll make the tea the first thing, before I untie a single knot; won't that be best, mamma? Because I know if I once begin to look, I shan't want to stop. Don't you think that is wise, mamma?"

But, alas! the fire had got very low; there was no making the tea quickly; and the toast was a work of time. And when all was over at length, it was then too late for Ellen to begin to undo packages. She struggled with impatience a minute or two, and then gave up the point very gracefully and went to bed.

She had a fine opportunity the next day to make up for the evening's disappointment. It was cloudy and stormy; going out was not to be thought of, and it was very unlikely that anybody would come in. Ellen joyfully allotted the whole morning to the examination and trial of her new possessions; and as soon as breakfast was over and the room clear she set about it. She first went through the desk and everything in it, making a running commentary on the excellence, fitness, and beauty of all it contained; then the dressing-box received a share, but a much smaller share, of attention; and, lastly, with fingers trembling with eagerness, she untied the packthread that was wound round the work-box, and slowly took off cover after cover; she almost screamed when the last was removed. The box was of satin-wood, beautifully finished, and lined with crimson silk; and Mrs. Montgomery had taken good care it should want nothing than Ellen might need to keep her clothes in perfect order.

"O, mamma, how beautiful! O, mamma, how good you are! Mamma, I promise you I'll never be a slattern. Here is more cotton than I can use up in a great while—every number, I do think; and needles, oh, the needles! what a parcel of them! and, mamma! what a lovely scissors! did you choose it, mamma, or did it belong to the box?"

"I chose it."

"I might have guessed it, mamma, it's just like you. And here's a thimble fits me exactly; and an emery bag! how pretty!—and a bodkin! this is a great deal nicer than yours, mamma—yours is decidedly the worse for wear;—and what's this?—O, to make eyelet holes with, I know. And O, mamma, here is almost everything, I think—here are tapes, and buttons, and hooks and eyes, and darning cotton, and silk-winders, and pins, and all sorts of things. What's this for, mamma?"

"That's a scissors to cut buttonholes with. Try it on that piece of paper that lies by you, and you will see how it works."

"Oh, I see," said Ellen; "how very nice that is. Well, I shall take great pains now to make my button-holes very handsomely."

One survey of her riches could by no means satisfy Ellen. For some time she pleased herself by going over and over the contents of the box, finding each time something new to like. At length she closed it, and keeping it still in her lap, sat awhile looking thoughtfully into the fire; till turning towards her mother she met her gaze, fixed mournfully, almost tearfully, on herself. The box was instantly shoved aside, and getting up and bursting into tears, Ellen went to her. "O, dear mother," she said, "I wish they were all back in the store, if I could only keep you!"

Mrs. Montgomery answered only by folding her to her heart.

"Is there no help for it, mamma?"

"There is none. We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God."

"Then it will all be good for you, mamma, but what will it be for me?" And Ellen sobbed bitterly.

"It will be all well, my precious child, I doubt not. I do not doubt it, Ellen. Do *you* not doubt it either, love; but from the hand that wounds seek the healing. He wounds that He *may* heal. He does not afflict willingly. Perhaps He sees, Ellen, that you never would seek Him while you had me to cling to."

Ellen clung to her at that moment, yet not more than her mother clung to her.

"How happy we were, mamma, only a year ago—*even* a month."

"We have no continuing city here," answered her mother, with a sigh. "But there is a home, Ellen, where changes do not come; and they that are once gathered there are parted no more for ever; and all tears are wiped from their eyes. I believe I am going fast to that home; and now my greatest concern is that my little Ellen—my precious baby—may follow me and come there too."

No more was said, nor could be said, till the sound of the doctor's steps upon the stair obliged each of them to assume an appearance of composure as speedily as possible. But they could not succeed perfectly enough to blind him. He did not seem very well satisfied, and told Ellen he believed he should have to get another nurse,—he was afraid she didn't obey orders.

While the doctor was there Ellen's Bible was brought in; and no sooner was he gone than it underwent as thorough an examination as the boxes had received. Ellen went over every part of it with the same great care and satisfaction; but mixed with a different feeling.

The words that caught her eye as she turned over the leaves seemed to echo what her mother had been saying to her. It began to grow dear already. After a little she rose and brought it to the sofa.

"Are you satisfied with it, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, mamma; it is perfectly beautiful outside and inside. Now, mamma, will you please to write my name in this precious book—my name, and anything else you please, mother. I'll bring you my new pen to write it with, and I've got ink here—shall I?"

She brought it, and Mrs. Montgomery wrote Ellen's name, and the date of the gift. The pen played a moment in her fingers, and then she wrote below the date:

"I love them that love Me; and they that seek Me early shall find Me."

This was for Ellen; but the next words were not for her; what made her write them?—

"I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee."

They were written almost unconsciously, and as if bowed by an unseen force, Mrs. Montgomery's head sank upon the open page; and her whole soul went up with her petition:

"Let these words be my memorial, that I have trusted in Thee. And oh, when these miserable lips are silent for ever, remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou has caused me to hope; and be unto my little one all Thou hast been to me. Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens."

She raised her face from the book, closed it, and gave it silently to Ellen. Ellen had noticed her action, but had no suspicion of the cause; she supposed that one of her mother's frequent feelings of weakness or sickness had made her lean her head upon the Bible, and she thought no more about it. However, Ellen felt that she wanted no more of her boxes that day. She took her old place by the side of her mother's sofa, with her head upon her mother's hand, and an expression of sorrow in her face that it had not worn for several days.

CHAPTER V.

A PEEP INTO THE WIDE WORLD.

THE next day would not do for the intended shopping; nor the next. The third day was fine, though cool and windy.

"Do you think you can venture out to-day, mamma?" said Ellen.

"I am afraid not. I do not feel quite equal to it; and the wind is a great deal too high for me, besides."

"Well," said Ellen, in a tone of one who is making up her mind to something, "we shall have a fine day by-and-bye, I suppose, if we wait long enough; we had to wait a great while for our first shopping day. I wish such another would come round."

"But the misfortune is," said her mother, "that we cannot afford to wait. November will soon be here, and your clothes may be suddenly wanted before they are ready, if we do not bestir ourselves. And Miss Rice is coming in a few days - I ought to have the merino ready for her."

"What will you do, mamma?"

"I do not know, indeed, Ellen; I am greatly at a loss."

"Couldn't papa get the stuffs for you, mamma?"

"No, he's too busy; and besides, he knows nothing at all about shopping for me; he would be sure to bring me exactly what I do not want. I tried that once."

"Well, what will you do, mamma? Is there nobody else you could ask to get the things for you? Mrs. Foster would do it, mamma."

"I know she would, and I should ask her without any difficulty, but she is confined to her room with a cold. I see nothing for it but to be patient and let things take their course, though if a favourable opportunity should offer you would have to go, clothes or no clothes; it would not do to lose the chance of a good escort."

And Mrs. Montgomery's face showed that this possibility of Ellen's going unprovided gave her some uneasiness. Ellen observed it.

"Never mind me, dearest mother; don't be in the least worried about my clothes. You don't know how little I think of them or care for them. It's no matter at all whether I have them or not."

Mrs. Montgomery smiled and passed her hand fondly over her little daughter's head, but presently resumed her anxious look out of the window.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Ellen, suddenly starting up, "a bright thought has just come into my head! I'll do it for you, mamma!"

"Do what?"

"I'll get the merino and things for you, mamma. You needn't smile - I will, indeed, if you will let me?"

"Perhaps you could; but my dear child I am afraid you wouldn't like the business."

"Yes I should; indeed, mamma, I should like it dearly if I could help you so. Will you let me try, mamma?"

"I don't like, my child, to venture you alone on such an errand, among crowds of people; I should be uneasy about you."

"Dear mamma, what would the crowds of people do to me? I am not a bit afraid. You know, mamma, I have often taken walks alone, — that's nothing new; and what harm should come to me while I am in the store? You needn't be the least uneasy about me—inay I go?"

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but was silent.

"May I go, mamma?" repeated Ellen. "Let me go at least and try what I can do. What do you say, mamma?"

"I don't know what to say, my daughter, but I am in difficulty on either hand. I will let you go and see what you can do. It would be a great relief to me to get this merino by any means."

"Then shall I go right away, mamma?"

"As well now as ever. You are not afraid of the wind?"

"I should think not," said Ellen; and away she scampered upstairs to get ready. With eager haste she dressed herself; then with great care and particularity, took her mother's instructions as to the article wanted; and finally set out sensible that a great trust was reposed in her, and feeling busy and important accordingly. But at the very bottom of Ellen's heart there was a little secret doubtfulness respecting her undertaking. She hardly knew it was there, but then she couldn't tell what it was that made her fingers so inclined to be tremulous while she was dressing, and that made her heart beat quicker than it ought, or than was pleasant, and one of her cheeks so much hotter than the other. However, she set forth upon her errand with a very brisk step, which she kept up till, on turning a corner she came in sight of the place she was going to. Without thinking much about it, Ellen had directed her steps to St. Clair and Fleury's. But her steps slackened as soon as she came in sight of it, and continued to slacken as she drew nearer, and she went up the broad flight of marble steps in front of the store very slowly indeed, though they were exceedingly low and easy.

Timidly she entered the large hall of the entrance. It was full of people, and the buzz of business was heard on all sides. Ellen had for some time past seldom gone shopping with her mother, and had never been in this store but once or twice before. She had not the remotest idea where, or in what apartment of the building, the merino counter was situated, and she could see no one to speak to. At length one of the clerks at the desk observed her, and remarked to Mr. St. Clair, who stood by, "There is a little girl, sir, who seems to be looking for something, or waiting for somebody; she has been standing there a good while." Mr. St. Clair, upon this, advanced to poor Ellen's relief.

"What do you wish, miss?" he said.

But Ellen had been so long preparing sentences, trying to utter them and failing in the attempt, that now, when an opportunity to speak and be heard was given her, the power of speech seemed to be gone.

"Do you wish anything, miss?" enquired Mr. St. Clair again.

"Mother sent me," stammered Ellen,— "I wish, if you please, sir, — mamma wished me to look at merinoes, sir, if you please."

"Is your mamma in the store?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "she is ill, and cannot come out, and she sent me to look at merinoes for her, if you please, sir."

"Here, Saunders," said Mr. Clair, "show this young lady the merinoes."

Mr. Saunders made his appearance from among a little group of clerks with whom he had been indulging in a few jokes by way of relief from the tedium of business. "Come this way," he said to Ellen, and sauntering before her with a rather dissatisfied air, led the way out of the entrance hall into another and much larger apartment. There were plenty of people here, too, and just as busy as those they had quitted. Mr. Saunders having brought Ellen to the merino counter, placed himself behind it; and, leaning over it and fixing his eyes carelessly upon her, asked what she wanted to look at. His tone and manner struck Ellen most unpleasantly, and made her again wish herself out of the store. He was a tall lank young man, with a quantity of fair hair combed down on each side of his face, a slovenly exterior, and the most disagreeable pair of eyes, Ellen thought, she had ever beheld. She could not bear to meet them, and cast down her own. Their look was bold, ill-bred, and ill-humoured; and Ellen felt, though she couldn't have told why, that she need not expect either kindness or politeness from him.

"What do you want to see, little one?" enquired this gentleman, as if he had a business on hand he would like to be rid of. Ellen heartily wished he was rid of it, and she too. "Merinoes, if you please," she answered without looking up.

"Well, what kind of merinoes? Here are all sorts and descriptions of merinoes, and I can't pull them all down, you know, for you to look at. What kind do you want?"

"I don't know without looking," said Ellen, "won't you please to show me some?"

He tossed down several pieces upon the counter, and tumbled them about before her.

"There," said he, "is that anything like what you want? There's

a pink one,—and there's a blue one, and there's a green one. Is that the kind?"

"This is the kind," said Ellen; but this isn't the colour I want."

"What colour do you want?"

"Something dark, if you please."

"Well, there, that green's dark; won't that do? See, that would make up very pretty for you."

"No," said Ellen; mamma don't like green."

"Why don't she come and choose her stuffs herself, then? What colour *does* she like?"

"Dark blue, or dark brown, or a nice grey, would do," said Ellen, "if it is fine enough."

"'Dark blue,' or 'dark brown,' or a 'nice grey,' eh! Well, she's pretty easy to suit. A dark blue I've shown you already,—what's the matter with that?"

"It isn't dark enough," said Ellen.

"Well," said he, discontentedly, pulling down another piece, "how'll that do? That's dark enough."

It was a fine and beautiful piece, very different from those he had shown her at first. Even Ellen could see that, and fumbling for her little pattern of merino, she compared it with the piece. They agreed perfectly as to fineness.

"What is the price of this?" she asked, with trembling hope that she was going to be rewarded by success for all the trouble of her enterprise.

"Two dollars a yard."

Her hopes and countenance fell together. "That's too high," she said with a sigh.

"Then take this other blue; come,—it's a great deal prettier than that dark one, and not so dear; and I know your mother will like it better."

Ellen's cheeks were tingling and her heart throbbing, but she couldn't bear to give up.

"Would you be so good as to show me some grey?"

He slowly and ill-humouredly complied, and took down an excellent piece of dark grey, which Ellen fell in love with at once; but she was again disappointed; it was fourteen shillings.

"Well, if you won't take that, take something else," said the man; "you can't have everything at once; if you will have cheap goods, of course you can't have the same quality that you like; but now here's this other blue, only twelve shillings, and I'll let you have it for ten if you'll take it."

"No, it is too light and too coarse," said Ellen; "mamma wouldn't like it."

"Let me see," said he, *spying* her pattern and pretending to compare it; "it's quite as fine as this, if that's all you want."

"Could you," said Ellen, timidly, "give me a little bit of this grey to show mamma?"

"Oh, no!" said he, impatiently, tossing over the cloths and throwing Ellen's pattern on the floor; "we can't cut up our goods; if people don't choose to buy of us they may go somewhere else, and if you cannot decide upon anything I must go and attend to those that can. I can't wait here all day."

"What's the matter, Saunders?" said one of his brother clerks, passing him.

"Why, I've been here this half hour showing cloths to a child that doesn't know merino from a sheep's back," said he, laughing. And some other customers coming up at the moment, he was as good as his word, and left Ellen to attend to them.

Ellen stood a moment stock still, just where he had left her, struggling with her feelings of mortification; she could not endure to let them be seen. Her face was on fire; her head was dizzy. She could not stir at first, and, in spite of her utmost efforts, she *could* not command back one or two rebel tears that forced their way; she lifted her hand to her face to remove them as quietly as possible.

"What is all this about, my little girl?" said a strange voice at her side. Ellen started, and turned her face, with the tears but half wiped away, toward the speaker. It was an old gentleman, an odd old gentleman too, she thought; one she certainly would have been rather shy of if she had seen him under other circumstances. But though his face was odd, it looked kindly upon her, and it was a kind tone of voice in which his question had been put; so he seemed to her like a friend. "What is all this?" repeated the old gentleman. Ellen began to tell what it was, but the pride which had forbidden her to weep before strangers gave way at one touch of sympathy, and she poured out tears much faster than words as she related her story, so that it was some little time before the old gentleman could get a clear notion of her case. He waited very patiently till she had finished; but then he set himself in good earnest about righting the wrong. "Hallo! you, sir!" he shouted, in a voice that made everybody look round; "you merino man! come and show your goods; why aren't you at your post, sir?"—as Mr. Saunders came up with an altered countenance—"here's a young lady you've left

standing unattended to I don't know how long; are these your manners?"

"The young lady did not wish anything, I believe, sir," returned Mr. Saunders softly.

"You know better, you scoundrel," retorted the old gentleman, who was in a great passion; "I saw the whole matter with my own eyes. You are a disgrace to the store, sir, and deserve to be sent out of it, which you are like enough to be."

"I really thought, sir," said Mr. Saunders smoothly,--for he knew the old gentleman, and knew very well he was a person that must not be offended,--"I really thought I was not aware, sir, that the young lady had any occasion for my services."

"Well, show your wares, sir, and hold your tongue. Now, my dear, what did you want?"

"I wanted a little bit of this grey merino, sir, to show to mamma. I couldn't buy it, you know, sir, until I found out whether she would like it."

"Cut a piece, sir, without any words," said the old gentleman. Mr. Saunders obeyed.

"Did you like this best?" pursued the old gentleman.

"I like this dark blue very much, sir, and I thought mamma would; but it's too high."

"How much is it?" enquired he.

"Fourteen shillings," replied Mr. Saunders.

"He said it was two dollars!" exclaimed Ellen.

"I beg pardon," said the crestfallen Mr. Saunders, "the young lady mistook me; I was speaking of another piece when I said two dollars."

"He said this was two dollars, and the grey fourteen shillings," said Ellen.

"Is the grey fourteen shillings?" enquired the old gentleman.

"I think not, sir," answered Mr. Saunders. "I believe not, sir,--I think it's only twelve,--I'll enquire, if you please, sir."

"No, no," said the old gentleman, "I know it was only twelve--I know your tricks, sir. Cut a piece off the blue. Now, my dear, are there any more pieces of which you would like to take patterns to show your mother?"

"No, sir," said the overjoyed Ellen; "I am sure she will like one of these."

"Now shall we go, then?"

"If you please, sir," said Ellen, "I should like to have my bit of

merino that I brought from home; mamma wanted me to bring it back again."

"Where is it?"

"That gentleman threw it on the floor."

"Do you hear, sir?" said the old gentleman; "find it directly."

Mr. Saunders found and delivered it, after stooping in search of it till he was very red in the face; and he was left, wishing heartily that he had some safe means of revenge, and obliged to come to the conclusion that none was within his reach, and that he must stomach his dignity in the best manner he could. But Ellen and her protector went forth most joyously together from the store.

"Do you live far from here?" asked the old gentleman.

"Oh no, sir," said Ellen, "not very; it's only at Green's Hotel in Southing Street."

"I'll go with you," said he, "and when your mother has decided which merino she will have, we'll come right back and get it. I do not want to trust you again to the mercy of that saucy clerk."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Ellen, "that is just what I was afraid of. But I shall be giving you a great deal of trouble, sir," she added, in another tone.

"No, you won't," said the old gentleman; "I can't be troubled, so you needn't say anything about that."

They went gaily along—Ellen's heart about five times as light as the one with which she had travelled that very road a little while before. Her old friend was in a very cheerful mood too, for he assured Ellen, laughingly, that it was no manner of use for her to be in a hurry, for he could not possibly set off and skip to Green's Hotel, as she seemed inclined to do. They got there at last. Ellen showed the old gentleman into the parlour, and ran upstairs in great haste to her mother. But in a few minutes she came down again, with a very April face, for smiles were playing in every feature, while the tears were yet wet upon her cheeks.

"Mamma hopes you'll take the trouble, sir, to come upstairs," she said, seizing his hand; "she wants to thank you herself, sir."

"It is not necessary," said the old gentleman, "it is not necessary at all;" but he followed his little conductor, nevertheless, to the door of her mother's room, into which she ushered him with great satisfaction.

Mrs. Montgomery was looking very ill—he saw that at a glance. She rose from her sofa, and extending her hand, thanked him with glistening eyes for his kindness to her child.

"I don't deserve any thanks, ma'am," said the old gentleman; "I suppose my little friend has told you what made us acquainted?"

"She gave me a very short account of it," said Mrs. Montgomery.

"She was very disagreeably tried," said the old gentleman. "I presume you do not need to be told, ma'am, that her behaviour was such as would have become any years. I assure you, ma'am, if I had no kindness in my composition to feel for the *child*, my honour as a gentleman would have made me interfere for the *lady*."

Mrs. Montgomery smiled, but looked through glistening eyes again on Ellen. "I am *very* glad to hear it," she replied. "I was very far from thinking, when I permitted her to go on this errand, that I was exposing her to anything more serious than the annoyance a timid child would feel at having to transact business with strangers."

"I suppose not," said the old gentleman; "but it isn't a sort of thing that should be often done. There are all sorts of people in this world, and a little one alone in a crowd is in danger of being trampled upon."

Mrs. Montgomery's heart answered this with an involuntary pang. He saw the shade that passed over her face as she said sadly:

"I know it, sir; and it was with strong unwillingness that I allowed Ellen this morning to do as she had proposed; but in truth I was making a choice between difficulties. I am very sorry I chose as I did. If you are a father, sir, you know better than I can tell you how grateful I am for your kind interference."

"Say nothing about that, ma'am; the less the better. I am an old man, and not good for much now, except to please young people. I think myself best off when I have the best chance to do that. So if you will be so good as to choose that merino, and let Miss Ellen and me go and despatch our business, you will be conferring and not receiving a favour. And any other errand that you please to entrust her with I'll undertake to see her safe through."

His look and manner obliged Mrs. Montgomery to take him at his word. A very short examination of Ellen's patterns ended in favour of the grey merino; and Ellen was commissioned not only to get and pay for this, but also to choose a dark dress of the same stuff, and enough of a certain article for a nankeen coat.

In great glee Ellen set forth again with her new old friend. Her hand was fast in his, and her tongue ran very freely, for her heart was completely opened to him. He seemed as pleased to listen as she was to talk; and by little and little Ellen told him all her history; the troubles that had come upon her in consequence of her mother's illness and her interposed journey and prospects.

That was a happy day to Ellen. They returned to St. Clair and Fleury's; bought the grey merino, and the nankeen, and a dark brown merino for a dress. "Do you want only one of these?" asked the old gentleman.

"Mamma said only one," said Ellen; "that will last me all the winter."

"Well," said he, "I think two will do better. Let us have another off the same piece, Mr. Shopman."

"But I'm afraid mother won't like it, sir," said Ellen, gently.

"Pho, pho," said he, "your mother has nothing to do with this; this is my affair." He paid for it accordingly. "Now, Miss Ellen," said he, when they left the store, "have you got anything in the shape of a good warm winter bonnet? For it's as cold as the mischief up there in Thirlwall; your pasteboard things won't do; if you don't take good care of your ears you will lose them some fine frosty day. You must quilt and pad, and all sorts of things, to keep alive and comfortable. So you haven't a hood, eh? Do you think you and I could make out to choose one that your mother would think wasn't quite a fright? Come this way, and let us see. If she don't like it she can give it away, you know."

He led the delighted Ellen into a milliner's shop, and after turning over a great many different articles, chose her a nice warm hood, or quilted bonnet. It was of dark blue silk, well made and pretty. He saw with great satisfaction that it fitted Ellen well, and would protect her ears nicely; and having paid for it and ordered it home, he and Ellen sallied forth into the street again. But he wouldn't let her thank him. "It is just the very thing I wanted, sir," said Ellen; "mamma was speaking about it the other day, and she did not see how I was ever to get one, because she did not feel at all able to go out, and I could not get one myself; I know she'll like it very much."

"Would you rather have something for yourself or your mother, Ellen, if you could choose, and have but one?"

"Oh, for mamma, sir," said Ellen—"a great deal!"

"Come in here," said he; "let us see if we can find anything she would like."

It was a grocery store. After looking about a little, the old gentleman ordered sundry pounds of figs and white grapes to be packed up in papers; and being now very near home he took one parcel and Ellen the other till they came to the door of Green's Hotel, where he committed both to her care.

"Won't you come in, sir?" said Ellen.

"No," said he, "I can't this time. I must go home to dinner."

"And shan't I see you any more, sir?" said Ellen, a shade coming over her face, which a minute before had been quite joyous.

"Well, I don't know," said he, kindly; "I hope you will. You shall hear from me again, at any rate, I promise you. We've spent one pleasant morning together, haven't we? Good bye, good-bye."

Ellen's hands were full, but the old gentleman took them in both his, packages and all, and shook them after a fashion, and again bidding her good-bye, walked away down the street.

The next morning Ellen and her mother were sitting quietly together, and Ellen had not finished her accustomed reading, when there came a knock at the door. "My old gentleman!" cried Ellen, as she sprang to open it. No—there was no old gentleman, but a black man with a brace of beautiful woodcocks in his hand. He bowed very civilly, and said he had been ordered to leave the birds with Miss Montgomery. Ellen, in surprise, took them from him, and likewise a note which he delivered into her hand. Ellen asked from whom the birds came, but with another polite bow the man said the note would inform her, and went away. In great curiosity she carried them and the note to her mother, to whom the letter was directed. It read thus:—

"Will Mrs. Montgomery permit an old man to please himself in his own way, by showing his regard for her little daughter, and not feel that he is taking a liberty? The birds are for Miss Ellen."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Ellen, jumping with delight, "did you ever see such a dear old gentleman? Now I know what he meant yesterday, when he asked me if I would rather have something for myself or for you. How kind he is! to do just the very thing for me that he knows would give me the most pleasure. Now, mamma, these birds are mine, you know, and I give them to you. You must pay me a kiss for them, mamma: they are worth that. Aren't they beauties?"

"They are very fine indeed," said Mrs. Montgomery; "this is just the season for woodcock, and these are in beautiful condition."

"Do you like woodcocks, mamma?"

"Yes, very much."

"Oh, how glad I am!" said Ellen. "I'll ask Sam to have them done very nicely for you, and then you will enjoy them so much."

The waiter was called, and instructed accordingly, and to him the birds were committed, to be delivered to the care of the cook.

"Now, mamma," said Ellen, "I think these birds have made me happy for all day."

"Then I hope, daughter, they will make you busy for all day. You have ruffles to hem, and the skirts of your dresses to make, we need not wait for Miss Rice to do that; and when she comes you will have to help her, for I can do little. You can't be too industrious."

"Well, mamma, I am as willing as can be."

This was the beginning of two pleasant weeks to Ellen: weeks to which she often looked back afterwards, so quietly and swiftly the days fled away in busy occupation and sweet intercourse with her mother. The passions which were apt enough to rise in Ellen's mind upon occasion were for the present kept effectually in check. She could not forget that her days with her mother would very soon be at an end, for a long time at least; and this consciousness, always present to her mind, forbade even the wish to do anything that might grieve or disturb her. Love and tenderness had absolute rule for the time, and even had power to overcome the sorrowful thoughts that would often rise, so that in spite of them peace reigned. And perhaps both mother and daughter enjoyed this interval the more keenly because they knew that sorrow was at hand.

All this while there was scarcely a day that the old gentleman's servant did not knock at their door, bearing a present of game. The second time he came with some fine larks, next was a superb grouse, then woodcock again. Curiosity strove with astonishment and gratitude in Ellen's mind. "Mamma," she said, after she had admired the grouse for five minutes, "I cannot rest without finding out who this old gentleman is."

"I am sorry for that," replied Mrs. Montgomery gravely, "for I see no possible way of your doing it."

"Why, mamma, couldn't I ask the man who brings the birds what his name is? He must know it."

"Certainly not: it would be very dishonourable."

"Would it, mamma?—why?"

"This old gentleman has not chosen to tell you his name; he wrote his note without signing it, and his man has obviously been instructed not to disclose it; don't you remember, he did not tell it when you asked him the first time he came. Now this shows that the old gentleman wishes to keep it secret, and to try to find it out in any way would be a very unworthy return for his kindness."

"Yes, it wouldn't be doing as I would be done by, to be sure, but would it be *dishonourable*, mamma?"

"Very. It is very dishonourable to try to find out that about other people which does not concern you, and which they wish to keep from you. Remember that, my dear daughter."

"I will, mamma. I'll never do it, I promise you."

"Even in talking with people, if you discern in them any unwillingness to speak upon a subject, avoid it immediately, provided, of course, that some higher interest does not oblige you to go on. That is true politeness, and true kindness, which are nearly the same; and *not* to do so, I assure you, Ellen, proves one wanting in true honour."

"Well, mamma, I don't care what his name is, - at least, I won't try to find out, - but it does worry me that I cannot think him. I wish he knew how much I feel obliged to him."

"Very well; write and tell him so."

"Mamma," said Ellen, opening her eyes very wide, "can I?—would you?"

"Certainly, - if you like. It would be very proper."

"Then I will! I declare it is a good notion. I'll do it the first thing, and then I can give it to that man if he comes to-morrow, as I suppose he will. Mamma," said she, on opening her desk, "how funny! don't you remember you wondered who I was going to write notes to? here is one now, mamma; it is very lucky I have got note-paper."

More than one sheet of it was ruined before Ellen had satisfied herself with what she wrote. It was a full hour from the time she began when she brought the following note for her mother's inspection:—

"Ellen Montgomery does not know how to thank the old gentleman who is so kind to her. Mamma enjoys the birds very much, and I think I do more; for I have the double pleasure of giving them to mamma, and of eating them afterwards; but your kindness is the best of all. I can't tell you how much I am obliged to you, sir, but I will always love you for all you have done for me.

"ELLEN MONTGOMERY."

This note Mrs. Montgomery approved; and Ellen having with great care and great satisfaction enclosed it in an envelope, succeeded in sealing it according to rule and very well. Mrs. Montgomery laughed when she saw the direction, but let it go. Without consulting her, Ellen had written on the outside, "To the old gentleman." She sent it the next morning by the hands of the same servant, who this time was the bearer of a plump partridge "To Miss Montgomery"; and her mind was a good deal easier on this subject from that time.

CHAPTER VI. •

NIGHT AND MORNING.

OCTOBER was now far advanced. One evening, the evening of the last Sunday in the month, Mrs. Montgomery was lying in the parlour alone. Ellen had gone to bed some time before ; and now in the stillness of the Sabbath evening the ticking of the clock was almost the only sound to be heard. The hands were rapidly approaching ten. Captain Montgomery was abroad ; and he had been so, according to custom, — or in bed, the whole day. The mother and daughter had had the Sabbath to themselves ; and most quietly and sweetly it had passed. They had read together ; prayed together, talked together a great deal ; and the evening had been spent in singing hymns ; but Mrs. Montgomery's strength failed here, and Ellen sang alone. *She* was not soon weary. Hymn succeeded hymn, with fresh and varied pleasure ; and her mother could not tire of listening. The sweet words, and the sweet airs, which were all old friends, and brought of themselves many a lesson of wisdom and consolation, by the mere force of association, needed not the recommendation of the clear-childish voice in which they were sung, which was of all things the sweetest to Mrs. Montgomery's ear. She listened, till she almost felt as if earth were left behind, and she and her child already standing within the walls of that city where sorrow and sighing shall be no more, and the tears shall be wiped from all eyes for ever. Ellen's next hymn, however, brought her back to earth again, but though her tears flowed freely while she heard it, all her causes of sorrow could not render them bitter.

“ God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil ;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil.

“ Trials make the promise sweet,—
• Trials give *new* life to prayer,—
Trials bring me to his feet.
Lay me low and keep me there.”

“ It is so, indeed, dear Ellen,” said Mrs. Montgomery, when she had finished, and holding the little singer to her breast ; “ I have always found it so. God is faithful. I have seen abundant cause to thank Him for all the evils He has made me suffer heretofore, and ~~and~~ do not doubt it will be the same with this last and worst one. Let us

glorify Him in the fires, my daughter; and if earthly joys be stripped from us, and if we be torn from each other, let us cling the closer to Him. He can and He will in that case make up to us more than all we have lost."

Ellen felt her utter inability to join in her mother's expressions of confidence and hope; to her there was no brightness on the cloud that hung over them—it was all dark. She could only press her lips in tearful silence to the one and the other of her mother's cheeks alternately. How sweet the sense of the coming parting made every such embrace! This one, for particular reasons, was often and long remembered. A few minutes they remained thus in each other's arms, cheek pressed against cheek, without speaking; but then Mrs. Montgomery remembered that Ellen's bedtime was already past, and dismissed her.

It was just upon the stroke of ten, and Mrs. Montgomery was still wrapped in her deep musings, when a sharp brisk footstep in the distance aroused her, rapidly approaching;—and she knew very well whose it was, and that it would play at the door, before she heard the quick run up the steps, succeeded by her husband's tread upon the staircase. And yet she saw him open the door with a kind of startled feeling which his appearance now invariably caused her; the thought always darted through her head, "perhaps he brings news of Ellen's going." Something, it would have been impossible to say what, in his appearance or manner confirmed this fear on the present occasion. Her heart felt sick, and she waited in silence to hear what he would say. He seemed very well pleased; sat down before the fire rubbing his hands, partly with cold and partly with satisfaction; and his first words were, "Well, we've got a fine opportunity for her at last."

How little he was capable of understanding the pang this announcement gave his poor wife! But she only closed her eyes and kept perfectly quiet and he never suspected it.

He unbuttoned his coat, and, taking the poker in his hand, began to mend the fire, talking the while.

"I am very glad of it indeed," said he,—"it's quite a load off my mind. Now we'll be gone directly, and high time it is—I'll take passage in the *England* the first thing to-morrow. And this is the best possible chance for Ellen—everything we could have desired. I began to feel very uneasy about it,—it was getting so late,—but I am quite relieved now."

"Who is it?" said Mrs. Montgomery, forcing herself to speak.

"Why, it's Mrs. Dunscombe," said the captain, flourishing his poker by way of illustration,—"you know her, don't you?—Captain Dunscombe's wife—she's going right through Thirlwall, and will take charge of Ellen as far as that, and there my sister will meet her with a waggon, and take her straight home. Couldn't be anything better. I'll write to let Fortune know when to expect her. Mrs. Dunscombe is a lady of the first family and fashion—in the highest degree respectable; she is going on to Fort Jameson with her daughter and a servant, and her husband is to follow her in a few days. I happened to hear of it to-day, and I immediately seized the opportunity to ask if she would not take Ellen with her as far as Thirlwall, and Dunscombe was only too glad to oblige me. I'm a very good friend of his, and he knows it."

"How soon does she go?"

"Why—I'm a little afraid of startling you—Dunscombe's wife must go, he told me, to-morrow morning; and we arranged that she should call in the carriage at six o'clock to take up Ellen."

Mrs. Montgomery put her hands to her face and sank back against the sofa.

"I was afraid you would take it so," said her husband, "but I don't think it is worth while. It is a great deal better as it is—a great deal better than if she had a long warning. You would fairly wear yourself out if you had time enough; and you haven't any strength to spare."

It was some while before Mrs. Montgomery could recover composure and firmness enough to go on with what she had to do, though, knowing the necessity, she strove hard for it. For several minutes she remained quite silent and quiet, endeavouring to collect her scattered forces; then, sitting upright and drawing her shawl around her, she exclaimed, "I must waken Ellen immediately!"

"Waken Ellen!" exclaimed her husband in his turn; "what on earth for? That's the very last thing to be done."

"Why, you would not put off telling her until to-morrow morning?" said Mrs. Montgomery.

"Certainly I would—that's the only proper way to do. Why in the world should you wake her up, just to spend the whole night in useless grieving?—unsitting her utterly for her journey, and doing yourself more harm than you can undo in a week. No no,—just let her sleep quietly, and you go to bed and do the same."

"But she will be so dreadfully shocked in the morning!"

"Not one bit more than she would be to-night, and she won't have so much time to feel it."

Mrs. Montgomery looked undecided and unsatisfied.

- "I'll take the responsibility of this matter on myself; you must not waken her, absolutely. It would not do at all."

Mrs. Montgomery silently rose and lit a lamp.

"You are not going into Ellen's room?" said the husband.

"I must—I must put her things together."

"But you'll not disturb Ellen?" said he, in a tone that required a promise.

"Not if I can help it."

Twice Mrs. Montgomery stopped before she reached the door of Ellen's room, for her heart failed her. But she *must* go on, and the necessary preparations for the morrow *must* be made; she knew it; and repeating this to herself she gently turned the handle of the door and pushed it open, and guarding the light with her hand from Ellen's eyes, she set it where it would not shine upon her. Having done this, she set herself, without once glancing at her little daughter, to put all things in order for her early departure on the following morning. But it was a bitter piece of work for her. She first laid out all that Ellen would need to wear,—the dark merino, the new nankeen coat, the white bonnet, the clean frill that her own hands had done up, the little gloves and shoes, and all the etceteras, with the thoughtfulness and the carefulness of love; but it went through and through her heart that it was the very last time a mother's fingers would ever be busy in arranging or preparing Ellen's attire; the very last time she would ever see or touch even the little inanimate things that belonged to her; and painful as the task was she was loth to have it come to an end. It was with a kind of lingering unwillingness to quit her hold of them that one thing after another was stowed carefully and neatly away in the trunk. She felt it was love's last act; words might indeed a few times yet come over the ocean on a sheet of paper;—but sight, and hearing, and touch must all have done henceforth for ever. Keenly as Mrs. Montgomery felt this, she went on busily with her work all the while; and when the last thing was safely packed, shut the trunk and locked it without allowing herself to stop and think, and even drew the straps. And then having finished all her task, she went to the bedside; she had not looked that way before.

Ellen was lying in the deep sweet sleep of childhood; the easy position, the gentle breathing, and the flush of health upon the cheek showed that all causes of sorrow were for the present far removed. Yet not so far either; for once when Mrs. Montgomery stooped to kiss her, light as the touch had been upon her lips, it seemed to awaken a

train of sorrowful recollections in the little sleeper's mind. A shade passed over her face, and with gentle, but sad accent the word, "Mamma!" burst from her parted lips. Only a moment,—and the shade passed away, and the expression of peace settled again upon her brow, but Mrs. Montgomery dared not try the experiment a second time. Long she stood looking upon her, as if she knew she was looking her last, then she knelt by the bedside and hid her face in the coverings,—but no tears came, the struggle in her mind and her anxious fear for the morning's trial made weeping impossible. Her husband at length came to seek her, and it was well he did, she would have remained there on her knees all night. He found something of the kind, and came to prevent it. Mrs. Montgomery suffered herself to be led away without making any opposition, and went to bed as usual, but sleep was far from her. The fear of Ellen's distress when she would be awakened and suddenly told the truth kept her in agony. In restless watchfulness she tossed and turned uneasily upon her bed, watching for the dawn, and dreading unspeakably to see it. The captain, in happy unconsciousness of his wife's distress and utter inability to sympathise with it, was soon in a sound sleep, and his heavy breathing was an aggravation of her trouble. It kept repeating, what indeed she knew already, that the only one in the world who ought to have shared and soothed her grief was not capable of doing either. Weired with watching and tossing to and fro, she at length lost herself in uneasy slumber, from which she suddenly started in terror, and seizing her husband's arm to arouse him, exclaimed, "It is time to wake Ellen!" but she had to repeat her efforts two or three times before she succeeded in making herself heard.

"What is the matter?" said he, heavily, and not over well pleased at the interruption.

"It is time to wake Ellen."

"No it isn't," said he relapsing, "it isn't time yet this great while."

"O, yes it is," said Mrs. Montgomery. "I am sure it is, I see the beginning of dawn in the east."

"Nonsense; it's no such thing, it's the glimmer of the lamp light; what is the use of your exciting yourself so for nothing? It won't be dawn these two hours. Wait till I find my repeater, and I'll convince you."

He found and struck it.

"There! I told you so—only one quarter after four; it would be absurd to wake her yet. Do go to sleep and leave it to me, I'll take care it is done in proper time."

Mrs. Montgomery sighed heavily, and again arranged herself to watch the eastern horizon, or rather with her face in that direction; for she could see nothing. But more quietly now she lay gazing into the darkness which it was in vain to try to penetrate; and thoughts succeeding thoughts in a more regular train at last fairly cheated her into sleep, much as she wished to keep it off. She slept soundly for nearly an hour; and when she awoke the dawn had really begun to break in the eastern sky. She again aroused Captain Montgomery, who this time allowed that it might be as well to get up; but it was with unutterable impatience that she saw him lighting a lamp, and moving about as leisurely as if he had nothing more to do than to get ready for breakfast at eight o'clock.

"O, do speak to Ellen!" she said, unable to control herself. "Never mind brushing your hair till afterwards. She will have no time for anything. O, do not wait any longer! what are you thinking of?"

"What are *you* thinking of?" said the captain; "there's plenty of time. Do quiet yourself - you're getting as nervous as possible. I'm going immediately."

Mrs. Montgomery fairly groaned with impatience and an agonising dread of what was to follow the disclosure to Ellen. But her husband coolly went on with his preparations, which indeed were not long in finishing; and then taking a lamp he at last went. He had in truth delayed on purpose, wishing the final leave-taking to be as brief as possible; and the grey streaks of light in the east were plainly showing themselves when he opened the door of his little daughter's room. He found her lying very much as her mother had left her,-- in the same quiet sleep, and with the same expression of calmness and peace spread over her whole face and person. It touched even him, and he was not readily touched by anything; it made him loth to say the word that would drive all the sweet expression so quickly and completely away. It must be said, however; the increasing light warned him he must not tarry; but it was with a hesitating almost faltering voice that he said, "Ellen!"

She stirred in her sleep, and the shadow came over her face again.

"Ellen! Ellen!"

She started up,--broad awake now;--and both the shadow and the peaceful expression were gone from her face. It was a look of blank astonishment at first with which she regarded her father, but very soon indeed that changed into a look of blank despair. He saw that she understood perfectly what he was there for, and that there was no need at all for him to trouble himself with making painful explanations.

"Come, Ellen," he said, -- "that's a good child, make haste and dress. There's no time to lose now, for the carriage will soon be at the door; and your mother wants to see you, you know."

Ellen hastily obeyed him, and began to put on her stockings and shoes.

"That's right--now you'll be ready directly. You are going with Mrs. Dunscombe. I have engaged her to take charge of you all the way quite to Thirlwall; she's the wife of Captain Dunscombe, whom you saw here the other day, you know; and her daughter is going with her, so you will have charming company. I dare say you will enjoy the journey very much; and your aunt will meet you at Thirlwall. Now, make haste--I expect the carriage every minute. I meant to have called you before, but I overslept myself. Don't be long."

And nodding encouragement, her father left her.

"How did she bear it?" asked Mrs. Montgomery when he returned.

"Like a little hero. She didn't say a word, or shed a tear. I expected nothing but that she would make a great fuss; but she has all the old spirit that you need to have, and have yet, for anything I know. She behaved admirably."

Mrs. Montgomery sighed deeply. She understood far better than her husband what Ellen's feelings were, and could interpret much more truly than he the signs of them; the conclusions she drew from Ellen's silent and tearless reception of the news differed widely from his. She now waited anxiously and almost fearfully for her appearance, which did not come as soon as she expected it.

It was a great relief to Ellen when her father ended his talking, and left her to herself; for she felt she could not dress herself so quickly with him standing there and looking at her, and his desire that she should be speedy in what she had to do could not be greater than her own. Her fingers did their work as fast as they could, with every joint trembling. But though a weight like a mountain was upon the poor child's heart, she could not cry; and she could not pray, though true to her constant habit she fell on her knees by her bedside as she always did: it was in vain; all was in a whirl in her heart and head, and after a minute she rose again, clasping her little hands together with an expression of sorrow that it was well her mother could not see. She was dressed very soon, but she shrank from going to her mother's room while her father was there. To save time she put on her coat, and everything but her bonnet and gloves; and then stood leaning against the bed-post, for she could not sit down, watching

with most intense anxiety to hear her father's step come out of the room and go downstairs. Every minute seemed too long to be borne; poor Ellen began to feel as if she could not contain herself. Yet five had not passed away when she heard the roll of carriage-wheels which came to the door and then stopped, and immediately her father opening the door to come out. Without waiting any longer Ellen opened her own, and brushed past him into the room he had quitted. Mrs. Montgomery was still lying on the bed, for her husband had insisted on her not rising. She said not a word, but opened her arms to receive her little daughter; and with a cry of indescribable expression Ellen sprang upon the bed, and was folded in them. But neither of them spoke or wept. What could words say? Heart met heart in that agony, for each knew all that was in the other. No—not quite all. Ellen did not know that the whole of bitterness death had for her mother she was tasting then. But it was true. Death had no more power to give her pain after this parting should be over. His after-work,—the parting between soul and body, would be welcome rather; yes, very welcome. Mrs. Montgomery knew it all well. She knew this was the last embrace between them. She knew it was the very last time that dear little form would ever lie on her bosom, or be pressed in her arms; and it almost seemed to her that soul and body must part company too when they should be rent asunder. Ellen's grief was not like this;—*she* did not think it was the last time;—but she was a child of very high spirit and violent passions, untamed at all by sorrow's discipline; and in proportion violent was the tempest excited by this first real trial. Perhaps, too, her sorrow was sharpened by a sense of wrong and a feeling of indignation at her father's cruelty in not waking her earlier.

Not many minutes had passed in this sad embrace, and no word had yet been spoken, no sound uttered, except Ellen's first inarticulate cry of mixed affection and despair, when Captain Montgomery's step was again heard slowly ascending the stairs. "He's coming to take me away!" thought Ellen; and in terror lest she should go without a word from her mother she burst forth with, "Mamma! speak!"

A moment before, and Mrs. Montgomery could not have spoken. But she could now; and as clearly and calmly the words were uttered as if nothing had been the matter, only her voice fell a little towards the last—

"God bless my darling child! and make her His own,—and bring her to that home where parting cannot be."

Ellen's eyes had been dry until now; but when she heard the sweet

sound of her mother's voice, it opened all the fountains of tenderness within her. She burst into uncontrollable weeping; it seemed as if she would pour out her very heart in tears; and she clung to her mother with a force that made it a difficult task for her father to remove her. He could not do it at first; and Ellen seemed not to hear anything that was said to her. He was very unwilling to use harshness; and after a little, though she had paid no attention to his entreaties or commands, yet sensible of the necessity of the case, she gradually relaxed her hold, and suffered him to draw her away from her mother's arms. He carried her downstairs, and put her on the front seat of the carriage, beside Mrs. Dunscombe's maid,—but Ellen could never recollect how she got there, and she did not feel the touch of her father's hand, nor hear him when he bid her good-bye; and she did not know that he put a large paper of candies and sugar-plums in her lap. She knew nothing but that she had lost her mother.

"It will not be so long," said the captain, in a kind of apologising way; "she will soon get over it, and you will not have any trouble with her."

"I hope so," returned the lady, rather shortly; and then, as the captain was making his parting bow, she added, in no very pleased tone of voice, "Pray, Captain Montgomery, is this young lady to travel without a bonnet?"

"Bless me! no," said the captain. "How is this? hasn't she a bonnet? I beg a thousand pardons, ma'am—I'll bring it on the instant."

After a little delay, the bonnet was found, but the captain overlooked the gloves in his hurry.

"I am very sorry you have been delayed, ma'am," said he.

"I hope we may be able to reach the boat yet," replied the lady.

"Drive on as fast as you can!"

A very polite bow from Captain Montgomery—a very slight one from the lady—and off they drove.

"Proud enough," thought the captain, as he went up the stairs again. "I reckon she don't thank me for her travelling companion. But Ellen's off—that's one good thing:—and now I'll go and engage berths in the *England*."

CHAPTER VII.

"STRANGERS WALK AS FRIENDS."

THE long drive to the boat was only a sorrowful blank to Ellen's recollection. She did not see the frowns that passed between her companions on her account. She did not know that her white bonnet was such a matter of merriment to Margaret Dunscombe and the maid, that they could hardly contain themselves. She did not find out that Miss Margaret's fingers were busy with her paper of sweets, which only a good string and a sound knot kept her from riling. Yet she felt very well that nobody there cared in the least for her sorrow. It mattered nothing; she wept on in her loneliness, and knew nothing that happened, till the carriage stopped on the wharf; even then she did not raise her head. Mrs. Dunscombe got out, and saw her daughter and servant do the same; then after giving some orders about the baggage, she returned to Ellen.

"Will you get out, Miss Montgomery? or would you prefer to remain in the carriage? We must go on board directly."

There was something, not in the words, but in the tone, that struck Ellen's heart with an entirely new feeling. Her tears stopped instantly, and wiping away quick the traces of them as well as she could, she got out of the carriage without a word, aided by Mrs. Dunscombe's hand. The party was presently joined by a fine-looking man, whom Ellen recognised as Captain Dunscombe.

"Dunscombe, do put these girls on board, will you? and then come back; I want to speak to you. Timmins, you go and look after them."

Captain Dunscombe obeyed. When they reached the deck, Margaret Dunscombe and the maid Timmins went straight to the cabin. Not feeling at all drawn towards their company, as indeed they had given her no reason, Ellen planted herself by the guards of the boat, not far from the gangway, to watch the busy scene that at another time would have been of great interest and amusement for her.

At last the boat rang her last bell. Captain Dunscombe put his wife on board and had barely time to jump off the boat again when the plank was withdrawn. The men on shore cast off the great loops of ropes that held the boat to enormous wooden posts on the wharf, and they were off!

At first it seemed to Ellen as if the wharf and the people upon it were sailing away from them backwards; but she presently forgot to

think of them at all. She was gone!—she felt the bitterness of the whole truth; the blue water already lay between her and the shore, where she so much longed to be. In that confused mass of buildings at which she was gazing, but which would be so soon beyond even gazing distance, was the only spot she cared for in the world; her heart was there. She could not see the place, to be sure, nor tell exactly whereabouts it lay in all that widespread city; but it was there, somewhere, and every minute was making it farther and farther off. It's a bitter thing, that sailing away from all one loves; and poor Ellen felt it so. She stood leaning both her arms upon the rail, the tears running down her cheeks, and blinding her so that she could not see the place toward which her straining eyes were bent. Somebody touched her sleeve—it was Timmins.

"Mrs. Dunscombe sent me to tell you she wants you to come into the cabin, miss."

Hastily wiping her eyes, Ellen obeyed the summons, and followed Timmins into the cabin. It was full of groups of ladies, children, and nurses—bustling and noisy enough. Ellen wished she might have stayed outside; she wanted to be by herself; but as the next best thing, she mounted upon the bench which ran all round the saloon, and kneeling on the cushion by one of the windows, placed herself with the edge of her bonnet just touching the glass, so that nobody could see a bit of her face, while she could look out near by as well as from the deck. Presently her ear caught, as she thought, the voice of Mrs. Dunscombe, saying in rather an undertone, but laughing too, "What a figure she does cut in that outlandish bonnet!"

Ellen had no particular reason to think *she* was meant, and yet she did think so. She remained quite still, but with raised colour and quickened breathing waited to hear what would come next. Nothing came at first, and she was beginning to think she had perhaps been mistaken, when she plainly heard Margaret Dunscombe say, in a loud whisper, "Mamma, I wish you could contrive some way to keep her in the cabin—can't you?" she looks so odd in that queer sun-bonnet kind of a thing, that anybody would think she had come out of the woods, and no gloves, too; I shouldn't like to have the Miss M'Arthurs think she belonged to us; can't you, mamma?"

If a thunderbolt had fallen at Ellen's feet, the shock would hardly have been greater. The lightning of passion shot through every vein. And it was not passion only; there was hurt feeling and wounded pride, and the sorrow, of which her heart was full enough before, now wakened afresh. The child was beside herself. One wild wish for a

hiding-place was the most pressing thought,—to be where tears could burst and her heart could break unseen. She slid off her bench and rushed through the crowd to the red curtain that cut off the far end of the saloon; and from there down to the cabin below,—people were everywhere. At last she spied a nook where she could be completely hidden. It was in the far back end of the boat, just under the stairs by which she had come down. Nobody was sitting on the three or four large mahogany steps that ran round that end of the cabin and sloped up to the little cabin window; and creeping beneath the stairs, and seating herself on the lowest of these steps, the poor child found that she was quite screened and out of sight of every human creature. It was time indeed; her heart had been almost bursting with passion and pain, and now the pent-up tempest broke forth with a fury that racked her little frame from head to foot; and the more because she strove to stifle every sound of it as much as possible. It was the very bitterness of sorrow, without any softening thought to allay it, and sharpened and made more bitter by mortification and a passionate sense of unkindness and wrong. And through it all, how constantly in her heart the poor child was reaching forth longing arms towards her far-off mother, and calling in secret on her beloved name. “Oh, mamma! mamma!” was repeated numberless times, with the unspeakable bitterness of knowing that she would have been a sure refuge and protection from all this trouble, but was now where she could neither reach nor hear her. Alas! how soon and how sadly missed.

Ellen's distress was not soon quieted, or, if quieted for a moment, it was only to break out afresh. And then she was glad to sit still and rest herself.

● Presently she heard the voice of the chambermaid upstairs, at a distance at first, and coming nearer and nearer. “Breakfast ready, ladies—Ladies, breakfast ready!” and then came all the people in a rush, pouring down the stairs over Ellen's head. She kept quite still and close, for she did not want to see anybody, and could not bear that anybody should see her. Nobody did see her; they all went off into the next cabin, where breakfast was set. Ellen began to grow tired of her hiding-place and to feel restless in her confinement; she thought this would be a good time to get away; so she crept from her station under the stairs and mounted them as quickly and as quietly as she could. She found almost nobody left in the saloon,—and breathing more freely, she possessed herself of her despised bonnet, which she had torn off her head in the first burst of her indignation, and

passing gently out at the door, went up the stairs which led to the promenade deck; she felt as if she could not get far enough from Mrs. Dunscombe.

The promenade deck was very pleasant in the bright morning sun; and nobody was there except a few gentlemen.

It was a fair, mild day, near the end of October, and one of the loveliest of that lovely month. Poor Ellen, however, could not fairly enjoy it just now. There was enough darkness in her heart to put a veil over all nature's brightness. The thought did pass through her mind, when she first went up, how very fair everything was; but she soon forgot to think about it at all. They were now in a wide part of the river; and the shore towards which she was looking was low and distant, and offered nothing to interest her. She ceased to look at it, and presently lost all sense of everything around and before her, for her thoughts went home. She remembered that sweet moment last night when she lay in her mother's arms, after she had stopped singing; could it be only last night? It seemed a long, long time ago. She went over again in imagination her shocked waking up that very morning,—how cruel that was!—her hurried dressing,—the miserable parting,—and those last words of her mother, that seemed to ring in her ears yet. "That home where parting cannot be." "Oh," thought Ellen, "how shall I ever get there? who is there to teach me now? O, what shall I do without you? O, mamma! how much I want you already!"

While poor Ellen was thinking these things over and over, her little face had a deep sadness of expression it was sorrowful to see. She was noticed, and with a feeling of compassion, by several people; but they all thought it was none of their business to speak to her, or they didn't know how. At length a gentleman who had been for some time walking up and down the deck, happened to look, as he passed, at her little pale face. He went to the end of his walk that time, but in coming back he stopped just in front of her, and bending down his face towards hers, said, "What is the matter with you, my little friend?"

Though his figure had passed before her a great many times Ellen had not seen him at all; for "her eyes were with her heart, and that was far away." Her cheek flushed with surprise as she looked up. But there was no mistaking the look of kindness in the eyes that met hers, nor the gentleness and grave truthfulness of the whole countenance. It won her confidence immediately. All the floodgates of Ellen's heart were at once opened. She could not speak, but rising

and clasping the hand that was held out to her in both her own, she bent down her head upon it, and burst into one of those uncontrollable agonies of weeping, such as the news of her mother's intended departure had occasioned that first sorrowful evening. He gently, and as soon as he could, drew her to a retired part of the deck, where they were comparatively free from other people's eyes and ears; then taking her in his arms he endeavoured by many kind and soothing words to stay the torrent of her grief. This fit of weeping did Ellen more good than the former one; that only exhausted, this in some little measure relieved her.

"What is all this about?" said her friend kindly. "Nay, never mind shedding any more tears about it, my child. Let me hear what it is; and perhaps we can find some help for it."

"Oh no you can't, sir," said Ellen, sadly.

"Well, let us see," said he—"perhaps I can. What is it that has troubled you so much?"

"I have lost my mother, sir," said Ellen.

"Your mother!—Lost her!—how?"

"She is very ill, sir, and obliged to go away over the sea to France to get well; and papa could not take me with her," said poor Ellen, weeping again, "and I am obliged to go to be among strangers. O, what shall I do?"

"Have you left your mother in the city?"

"Oh yes, sir! I left her this morning."

"What is your name?"

"Ellen Montgomery."

"Is your mother obliged to go to Europe for her health?"

"Oh yes, sir; nothing else would have made her go, but the doctor said she would not live long if she didn't go, and that would cure her."

"Then you hope to see her come back by-and-by, don't you?"

"O yes, sir; but it won't be this great, great long while; it seems to me as if it was for ever."

"Ellen, do you know who it is that sends sickness and trouble upon us?"

"Yes, sir, I know; but I don't feel that that makes it any easier."

"Do you know *why* He sends it? He is the God of love,—He does not trouble us willingly,—He has said so; why does He ever make us suffer, do you know?"

"No, sir."

"Sometimes He sees that if He lets them alone, His children will

love some dear thing on the earth better than Himself, and He knows they will not be happy if they do so, and then, because He loves them He takes it away,—perhaps it is a dear mother, or a dear daughter,—or else He hinders their enjoyment of it, that they may remember Him and give their whole hearts to Him. He wants their whole hearts that He may bless them. Are you one of His children, Ellen?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, with swimming eyes, but cast down to the ground.

"How do you know that you are not?"

• "Because I do not love the Saviour."

"Do you not love Him, Ellen?"

"I am afraid not, sir."

"Why are you afraid not? what makes you think so?"

• "Mamma said I could not love Him at all if I did not love Him best; and oh, sir," said Ellen, weeping, "I do love mamma a great deal better."

"You love your mother better than you do the Saviour?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen; "how can I help it?"

"Then if He had left you your mother, Ellen, you would never have cared or thought about Him?"

Ellen was silent.

"Is it so?—would you, do you think?"

"I don't know, sir," said Ellen, weeping again,—"oh, sir, how can I help it?"

• "Then, Ellen, can you not see the love of your Heavenly Father in this trial? He saw that His little child was in danger of forgetting Him, and He loved you, Ellen; and so He has taken your dear mother, and sent you away where you will have no one to look to but Him; and now He says to you, 'My daughter, give *Me* thy heart.' Will you do it, Ellen?"

Ellen wept exceedingly while the gentleman was saying these words, clasping his hands still in both hers; but she made no answer. He waited till she had become calmer, and then went on in a low tone—

"What is the reason that you do not love the Saviour, my child?"

• "Mamma says it is because my heart is so hard."

• "That is true; but you do not know how good and how lovely He is, or you could not help loving Him. Do you often think of Him, and think much of Him, and ask Him to show you Himself that you may love Him?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "not often."

"You pray to Him, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; but not so."

"But you ought to pray to Him so. We are all blind by nature, Ellen; we are all hard-hearted; none of us can see Him or love Him unless He opens our eyes and touches our hearts; but He has promised to do this for those that seek Him. Do you remember what the blind man said when Jesus asked him what He should do for him?—he answered, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight!' That ought to be your prayer now, and mine too; and the Lord is just as ready to hear us as He was to hear the poor blind man, and you know He cured him. Will you ask Him, Ellen?"

A smile was almost struggling through Ellen's tears as she lifted her face to that of her friend, but she instantly looked down again.

"Shall I put you in mind, Ellen, of some things about Christ that ought to make you love Him with all your heart?"

"Oh yes, sir! if you please."

"Then tell me first what it is that makes you love your mother so much."

"Oh, I can't tell you, sir;—everything, I think."

"I suppose the great thing is that she loves *you* so much?"

"Oh, yes, sir," said Ellen, strongly.

"But how do you know that she loves you? how has she shown it?"

Ellen looked at him, but could give no answer; it seemed to her that she must bring the whole experience of her life before him to form one.

"I suppose," said her friend, "that, to begin with the smallest thing, she has always been watchfully careful to provide everything that could be useful or necessary for you:—she never forgot your wants, or was careless about them!"

"No, indeed, sir."

"And perhaps you recollect that she never minded trouble or expense or pain where your good was concerned;—she would sacrifice her own pleasure at any time for yours."

Ellen's eyes gave a quick and strong answer to this, but she said nothing.

"And in all your griefs and pleasures you were sure of finding her ready and willing to feel with you and for you, and to help you if she could? And in all the times you have seen her tired, no fatigue ever wore out her patience, nor any naughtiness of yours ever lessened her love; she could not be weary of waiting upon you when you were sick."

nor of bearing with you when you forgot your duty,—more ready always to receive you than you to return. Isn't it so?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"And you can recollect a great many words and looks of kindness and love—many and many endeavours to teach you and lead you in the right way—all showing the strongest desire for your happiness in this world, and in the next?"

"Oh yes, sir," said Ellen tearfully; and then added, "Do you know my mother, sir?"

"No," said he, smiling, "not at all; but my own mother has been in many things like this to me, and I judged yours might have been such to you. Have I described her right?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," said Ellen; "exactly."

"And in return for all this, you have given this dear mother the love and gratitude of your whole heart, haven't you?"

"Indeed I have, sir;" and Ellen's face said it more than her words.

"You are very right," he said, gravely, "to love such a mother—to give her all possible duty and affection;—she deserves it. But, Ellen, in all these very things I have been mentioning Jesus Christ has shown that He deserves it far more. Do you think, if you had never behaved like a child to your mother—if you had never made her the least return of love or regard—that she would have continued to love you as she does?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "I do not think she would."

"Have you ever made any fit return to God for His goodness to you?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, in a low tone.

"And yet there has been no change in His kindness. Just look at it, and see what He has done and is doing for you. In the first place, it is not your mother, but He, who has given you every good and pleasant thing you have enjoyed in your whole life. You love your mother because she is so careful to provide for all your wants: but who gave her the materials to work with? she has only been, as it were, the hand by which He supplied you. And who gave you such a mother!—there are many mothers not like her;—who put into her heart the truth and love that have been blessing you ever since you were born? It is all—all God's doing, from first to last; but His child has forgotten Him in the very gifts of His mercy."

Ellen was silent, but looked very grave.

"Your mother never minded her own ease or pleasure when your

good was concerned. Did Christ mind His? You know what He did to save sinners, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, I know; mamma often told me."

"Though He was rich, yet, for our sake, He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.' He took our burden of sin upon Himself, and suffered that terrible punishment—all to save you and such as you. And now He asks His children to leave off sinning and come back to Him who has bought them with His own blood. He did this because He *loved* you; does He not deserve to be loved in return?"

Ellen had nothing to say; she hung down her head further and further.

"And patient and kind as your mother is, the Lord Jesus is kinder and more patient still. In all your life so far, Ellen, you have not loved or obeyed Him; and yet He loves you, and is ready to be your friend. Is He not even to-day taking away your dear mother for the very purpose that He may draw you gently to Himself and fold you in His arms, as He promised to do with His lambs? He knows you can never be happy anywhere else."

The gentleman paused again, for he saw that the little listener's mind was full.

"Has not Christ shown that He loves you better even than your mother does? And were there ever sweeter words of kindness than these?"

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

He waited a minute, and then added gently, "Will you come to Him, Ellen?"

Ellen lifted her tearful eyes to his; but there were tears there too, and her own sank instantly. She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed out in broken words, "Oh, if I could—but I don't know how."

"Do you wish to be His child, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, sir—if I could."

"I know, my child, that sinful heart of yours is in the way, but the Lord Jesus can change it, and will, if you will give it to Him. He is looking upon you now, Ellen, with more kindness and love than any

earthly father or mother could, waiting for you to give that little heart of yours to Him, that He may make it holy and fill it with blessing. He says, you know, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' Do not grieve Him away, Ellen."

Ellen sobbed, but all the passion and bitterness of her tears was gone. Her heart was completely melted.

"If your mother were here, and could do for you what you want, would you doubt her love to do it? would you have any difficulty in asking her?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then do not doubt His love who loves you better still. Come to Jesus. Do not fancy He is away up in heaven out of reach of hearing—He is here, close to you, and knows every wish and throb of your heart. Think you are in His presence and at His feet,—even now,—and say to Him in your heart, 'Lord, look upon me—I am not fit to come to Thee, but Thou hast bid me come—take me and make me Thine own—take this hard heart that I can do nothing with, and make it holy and fill it with Thy love—I give it and myself into Thy hands, O dear Saviour!'"

These words were spoken very low, that only Ellen could catch them. Her bowed head sank lower and lower till he ceased speaking. He added no more for some time; waited till she had resumed her usual attitude and appearance, and then said,—

"Ellen, could you join in heart with my words?"

"I did, sir,—I couldn't help it, all but the last."

"All but the last?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, Ellen, if you say the first part of my prayer with your whole heart, the Lord will enable you to say the last too,—do you believe that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you not make that your constant prayer all you are heard and answered?"

"Yes, sir."

And he thought he saw that she was in earnest.

"Perhaps the answer may not come at once,—it does not always;—but it will come as surely as the sun will rise to-morrow morning.

'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.' But then you must be in earnest. And if you are in earnest, is there nothing you have to do besides *praying*?"

Ellen looked at him without making any answer.

"When a person is in earnest, how does he show it?"

"By doing everything he possibly can to get what he wants."

"Quite right," said her friend, smiling; "and has God bidden us to do nothing besides pray for a new heart?"

"O yes, sir; He has told us to do a great many things."

"And will He be likely to grant that prayer, Ellen, if He sees that you do not care about displeasing Him in those 'great many things'?—will He judge that you are sincere in wishing for a new heart?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Then if you are resolved to be a Christian, you will not be contented with praying for a new heart, but you will begin at once to be a servant of God. You can do nothing well without help, but you are sure the help will come; and from this good day you will seek to know and to do the will of God, trusting in His dear Son to perfect that which concerneth you. My little child," said the gentleman, softly and kindly, "are you ready to say you will do this?"

As she hesitated, he took a little book from his pocket, and turning over the leaves, said, "I am going to leave you for a little while—I have a few moments' business downstairs to attend to; and I want you to look over this hymn and think carefully of what I have been saying, will you?—and resolve what you will do."

Ellen got off his knee, where she had been sitting all this while, and silently taking the book, sat down in the chair he had quitted. Tears ran fast again, and many thoughts passed through her mind, as her eyes went over and over the words to which he had pointed:—

"Behold the Saviour at the door,
He gently knocks,—has knock'd before,—
Has waited long,—is waiting still,—
You treat no other friend so ill.

"Oh lovely attitude!—He stands
With open heart and outstretch'd hands.
Oh matchless kindness!—and He shows
This matchless kindness to His foes.

"Admit Him—for the human breast
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest.
Admit Him—for the hour's at hand
When at His door, denied, you'll stand.

"Open my heart, Lord, enter in;
Slay every foe, and conquer sin.
Here now to Thee I all resign,—
My body, soul, and all are Thine."

The last two lines Ellen longed to say, but could not; the two preceding were the very speech of her heart.

Not more than fifteen minutes had passed, when her friend came back again. The book hung in Ellen's hand; her eyes were fixed on the floor.

"Well," he said kindly, taking her hand, "what's your decision?"

Ellen looked up.

"Have you made up your mind on that matter we were talking about?"

"Yes, sir," Ellen said in a low voice, casting her eyes down again.

"And how have you decided, my child?"

"I will try to do as you said, sir."

"You will begin to follow your Saviour, and to please Him, from this day forward?"

"I will try, sir," said Ellen, meeting his eyes as she spoke. Again the look she saw made her burst into tears. She wept violently.

"God bless you and help you, my dear Ellen," said he, gently passing his hand over her head; "but do not cry any more—you have shed too many tears this morning already. We will not talk about this any more now."

And he spoke only soothing and quieting words for a while to her; and then asked if she would like to go over the boat and see the different parts. Ellen's joyful agreement with this proposal was only qualified by the fear of giving him trouble. But he put that entirely by.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEAVES US IN THE STREET.

THE going over the boat held them a long time, for Ellen's new friend took kind pains to explain to her whatever he thought he could make interesting; he was amused to find how far she pushed her enquiries into the how and the why of things. For the time her sorrows were almost forgotten.

"What shall we do now?" said he, when they had at last gone through the whole; "would you like to go to your friends?"

"I haven't any friends on board, sir," said Ellen, with a swelling heart.

"Haven't any friends on board! what do you mean? Are you alone?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "not exactly alone; my father put me in the

care of a lady that is going to Thirlwall ; but they are strangers and not friends."

"Are they *un*friends? I hope you don't think, Ellen, that strangers cannot be friends too?"

"No indeed, sir, I don't," said Ellen, looking up with a face that was fairly brilliant with its expression of gratitude and love. But casting it down again, she added, "But they are not my friends, sir."

"Well, then," he said, smiling, "will you come with me?"

"O yes, sir! if you will let me, and if I shan't be a trouble to you, sir."

"Come this way," said he, "and we'll see if we cannot find a nice place to sit down, where no one will trouble us."

Such a place was found. And Ellen would have been quite satisfied though the gentleman had done no more than merely permit her to remain there by his side ; but he took out his little Bible, and read and talked to her for some time.

After dinner, Ellen and her friend went up to the promenade deck again, and there for a while they paced up and down, enjoying the pleasant air and quick motion, and the lovely appearance of everything in the mild hazy sunlight. Another gentleman, however, joining them, and entering into conversation, Ellen silently quitted her friend's hand and went and sat down at the side of the boat. After taking a few turns more, and while still engaged in talking, he drew his little hymn-book out of his pocket, and with a smile put it into Ellen's hand as he passed. She gladly received it, and spent an hour or more very pleasantly in studying and turning it over. At the end of that time, the stranger having left him, Ellen's friend came and sat down by her side.

"How do you like my little book?" said he.

"O very much indeed, sir."

"Then you love hymns, do you?"

"Yes I do, sir, dearly."

"Do you sometimes learn them by heart?"

"O yes, sir, often. Mamma often made me. I have learnt two since I have been sitting here."

"Have you?" said he ; "which are they?"

"One of them is the one you showed me this morning, sir."

"And what is your mind now about the question I asked you this morning?"

Ellen cast down her eyes from his enquiring glance, and answered in a low tone, "Just what it was then, sir."

"Have you been thinking of it since?"

"I have thought of it the whole time, sir."

"And you are resolved you will obey Christ henceforth?"

"I am resolved to try, sir."

He took the hymn-book from her hand, and turning over the leaves, marked several places in pencil.

"I am going to give you this," he said, "that it may serve to remind you of what we have talked to-day, and of your resolution."

Ellen flushed high with pleasure.

"I have put this mark," said he, showing her a particular one, "in a few places of this book, for you; wherever you find it you may know there is something I want you to take special notice of. There are some other marks here too, but they are mine; *these* are for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Ellen, delighted; "I shall not forget."

He knew from her face what she meant;—not the *marks*.

The day wore on, thanks to the unvaried kindness of her friend, with great comparative comfort to Ellen. Late in the afternoon they were resting from a long walk up and down the deck.

"What have you got in this package that you take such care of?" said he, smiling.

"O! candies," said Ellen; "I am always forgetting them. I meant to ask you to take some. Will you have some, sir?"

"Thank you. Aren't you afraid of catching cold? This wind is blowing pretty fresh, and you've been bonnetless all day; what's the reason?"

Ellen looked down, and coloured a good deal.

"What's the matter?" said he, laughing; "has any mischief befallen your bonnet?"

"No, sir," said Ellen in a low tone, her colour mounting higher and higher; "it was laughed at this morning."

"Laughed at!—who laughed at it?"

"Mrs. Dunscombe and her daughter, and her maid."

"Did they? I don't see much reason in that, I confess. What did they think was the matter with it?"

"I don't know, sir;—they said it was outlandish, and what a figure I looked in it."

"Well, certainly, that was not very polite. Put it on and let me see."

• Ellen obeyed.

"I am not the best judge of ladies' bonnets, it is true," said he, "but I can see nothing about it that is not perfectly proper and

suitable,—nothing in the world! So that is what has kept you bareheaded all day? Didn't your mother wish you to wear that bonnet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that ought to be enough for you. Will you be ashamed of what *she* approved, because some people that haven't probably half her sense choose to make merry with it?—is that right?" he said, gently. "Is that honouring her as she deserves?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, looking up into his face, "but I never thought of that before; I am sorry."

"Never mind being laughed at, my child. If your mother says a thing is right, that's enough for you—let them laugh!"

"I won't be ashamed of my bonnet any more," said Ellen, trying it on; "but they made me very unhappy about it, and very angry too."

"I am sorry for that," said her friend gravely. "Have you quite got over it, Ellen?"

"Oh yes, sir, long ago."

"Are you sure?"

"I am not angry now, sir."

"Is there no unkindness left towards the people who laughed at you?"

"I don't like them much," said Ellen; "how can I?"

"You cannot of course *like* the company of ill-behaved people, and I do not wish that you should; but you can and ought to feel just as kindly disposed towards them as if they had never offended you—just as willing and inclined to please them or do them good. Now, could you offer Miss—what's her name?—some of your candies with as hearty good-will as you could before she laughed at you?"

"No, sir, I couldn't. I don't feel as if I ever wished to see them again."

"Then, my dear Ellen, you have something to do, if you were in earnest in the resolve you made this morning. If ye forgive unto men their trespasses, my Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will my Father forgive your trespasses!"

He was silent, and so was Ellen for some time. His words had raised a struggle in her mind; and she kept her face turned towards the shore, so that her bonnet shielded it from view; but she did not in the least know what she was looking at. The sun had been some time descending through a sky of cloudless splendour, and now was

just kissing the mountain-tops of the western horizon. Slowly and with great majesty he sank behind the distant blue line, till only a glittering edge appeared,—and then that was gone. There were no clouds hanging over his setting, to be gilded and purpled by the parting rays, but a region of gloomy long remained, to show where his path had been.

The eyes of both were fixed upon this beautiful scene, but only one was thinking of it. Just as the last glimpse of the sun had disappeared Ellen turned her face, bright again, towards her companion. He was intently gazing towards the hills that had so drawn Ellen's attention a while ago, and thinking still more intently, it was plain; so though her mouth had been open to speak, she turned her face away again as suddenly as it had just sought his. He saw the motion, however.

"What is it, Ellen?" he said.

Ellen looked again with a smile.

"I have been thinking, sir, of what you said to me."

"Well?" said he, smiling in answer.

"I can't *like* Mrs. and Miss Dunscombe as well as if they hadn't done so to me, but I will try to behave as if nothing had been the matter, and be as kind and polite to them as if they had been kind and polite to me."

"And how about the sugar-plums?"

"The sugar-plums! Oh," said Ellen, laughing, "Miss Margaret may have them all if she likes—I'm quite willing. Not but I had rather give them to you, sir."

"You give me something a good deal better when I see you try to overcome a wrong feeling. You mustn't rest till you get rid of every bit of ill-will that you feel for this and any other unkindness that you may suffer. You cannot do it yourself, but you know who can help you. I hope you have asked Him, Ellen."

"I have, sir, indeed."

"Keep asking Him, and He will do everything for you."

A silence of some length followed. Ellen began to feel very much the fatigue of this exciting day, and sat quietly by her friend's side, leaning against him. The wind had changed about sundown, and now blew light from the south, so that they did not feel it all.

"You are very tired," said Ellen's friend to her,—"I see you are. A little more patience my child;—we shall be at our journey's end before a very great while."

"I am almost sorry," said Ellen, "though I *am* tired. We don't go for the steamboat to-morrow; do we, sir?"

"No,—in the stage."

"Shall *you* be in the stage, sir?"

"No, my child. But I am glad *you* and I have spent this day together."

"Oh, sir!" said Ellen, "I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for you!"

There was silence again, and the gentleman almost thought his little charge had fallen asleep, she sat so still. But she suddenly spoke again, and in a tone of voice that showed sleep was far away.

"I wish I knew where mamma is now!"

"I do not doubt, my child, from what you told me, that it is well with her wherever she is. Let that thought comfort you whenever you remember her."

"She must want me so much," said poor Ellen, in a scarcely audible voice.

"She has not lost her best friend, my child."

"I know it, sir," said Ellen, with whom grief was now getting the mastery; "but oh! it's just near the time when I used to make the tea for her—who'll make it now? she'll want me,—oh, what shall I do!" and overcome completely by this recollection, she threw herself into her friend's arms, and sobbed aloud.

There was no reasoning against this. He did not attempt it; but with the utmost gentleness and tenderness endeavoured, as soon as he might, to soothe and calm her. He succeeded at last; with a sort of despairing submission, Ellen ceased her tears, and arose to her former position. But he did not rest from his kind endeavours till her mind was really eased and comforted; which, however, was not long before the lights of a city began to appear in the distance. And with them appeared a dusky figure ascending the stairs, which, upon nearer approach, proved by the voice to be Timmins.

"Is this Miss Montgomery?" said she; "I can't see, I am sure, it's so dark. Is that you, Miss Montgomery?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "it is I; do you want me?"

"If you please, miss, Mrs. Dunstombe wants you to come right down; we're almost in, she says, miss."

"I'll come directly, Miss Timmins," said Ellen. "Don't wait for me—I won't be a minute—I'll come directly."

"I must go," said Ellen, standing up and extending her hand; "Good-bye, sir."

She could hardly say it. He drew her towards him and kissed her cheek once or twice; it was well he did; for it sent a thrill of pleasure

to Ellen's heart that she did not get over that evening, nor all the next day.

"God bless you, my child," he said gravely, but cheerfully; "and good-night!—you will feel better, I trust, when you have had some rest and refreshment."

Ellen entered the saloon only to sit down and cry as if her heart would break. She saw and heard nothing till Mrs. Dunscombe's voice bade her make haste and be ready, for they were going ashore in five minutes.

And in less than five minutes ashore they went.

"Which hotel, ma'am?" asked the servant who carried her baggage—"the Eagle, or Foster's?"

"The Eagle," said Mrs. Dunscombe.

"Come this way, then, ma'am," said another man, the driver of the Eagle carriage. "Now, ma'am, step in, if you please."

Mrs. Dunscombe put her daughter in.

"But it's full!" said she to the driver; "there isn't room for another one."

"Oh yes, ma'am, there is," said the driver, holding the door open; "there's plenty of room for you, ma'am—just get in, ma'am, if you please—we'll be there in less than two minutes."

"Timmins, you'll have to walk," said Mrs. Dunscombe. "Miss Montgomery, would you rather ride, or walk with Timmins?"

"I would rather walk, ma'am, if you please," said Ellen.

"Very well, said Mrs. Dunscombe, getting in;—"Timmins you know the way."

And off went the coach with its load.

Picking a passage-way out of the crowd, she and Timmins now began to make their way up one of the comparatively quiet streets.

It was a strange place—that she felt. Only one pleasant thing Ellen saw on her walk, and that was the sky; and that looked just as it did at home; and very often Ellen's gaze was fixed upon it, much to the astonishment of Miss Timmins, who had to be not a little watchful for the safety of Ellen's feet while her eyes were thus employed. She had taken a great fancy to Ellen, however, and let her do as she pleased, keeping all her wonderment to herself.

"Take care, Miss Ellen!" cried Timmins, giving her arm a great pull. "I declare I just saved you out of that gutter! poor child! you are dreadfully tired, ain't you?"

"Yes, I am very tired, Miss Timmins," said Ellen; "have we much farther to go?"

"Not a great deal, dear; cheer up! we are almost there. I hope Mrs. Dunscombe will want to ride one of these days herself, and can't."

"Oh, don't say so, Miss Timmins," said Ellen, "I don't wish so, indeed."

"Well, I should think you would," said Timmins. "I should think you'd be fit to poison her; -- I should, I know, if I was in your place."

"Oh no," said Ellen, "that wouldn't be right; that would be very wrong."

"Wrong!" said Timmins -- "why would it be wrong? she hasn't behaved good to you."

"Yes," said Ellen, "but don't you know the Bible says if we do not forgive people what they do to us, we shall not be forgiven ourselves?"

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Timmins, "you beat all! But here's the Eagle at last, and I am glad for your sake, dear."

Ellen was shown into the ladies' parlour. She was longing for a place to rest, but she saw directly it was not to be there. The room was large, and barely furnished; and round it were scattered part of the carriage-load of people that had arrived a quarter of an hour before her. They were waiting till their rooms should be ready. Ellen silently found herself a chair and sat down to wait with the rest, as patiently as she might. Few of them had as much cause for impatience; but she was the only perfectly mute and uncomplaining one there. Her two companions, however, between them, fully made up her share of fretting. At length a servant brought the welcome news that their room was ready, and the three marched upstairs. It made Ellen's very heart glad when they got there to find a good-sized, cheerful-looking bedroom, comfortably furnished, with a bright fire burning, large curtains let down to the floor, and a nice warm carpet upon it. Taking off her bonnet, and only that, she sat down on a low cushion by the corner of the fire-place, and leaning her head against the jamb, fell fast asleep almost immediately. Mrs. Dunscombe set about arranging herself for the tea-table.

"Well!" she said, "one day of this precious journey is over!"

"Does Ellen go with us to-morrow, mamma?"

"Oh yes! -- quite to Thirlwall."

"Where is she going to sleep to-night?" asked Miss Margaret.

"I don't know, I am sure. I suppose I shall have to have a cot brought in here for her."

"What a plague!" said Miss Margaret. "It will lumber up the room so! There's no place to put it. Couldn't she sleep with Timmins?"

"Oh, she *could*, of course—just as well as not, only people would make such a fuss about it;—it wouldn't do;—we must bear it for once. I'll try and not be caught in such a scrape again. Margaret, I can't go down to tea with a train of children at my heels. I shall leave you and Ellen up here, and I'll send up your tea to you."

"Oh no, mamma!" said Margaret eagerly; "I want to go down with you. Look here, mamma! she's asleep, and you needn't wake her up."

"Well," said Mrs. Dunscombe, "I don't care—but make haste to get ready, for I expect every minute the tea-bell will ring."

"Timmins! Timmins!" cried Margaret, "come here and fix me—quick!"

After Mrs. and Miss Dunscombe were gone down, Timmins employed herself a little while in putting all things about the room to rights; and then sat down to take *her* rest, dividing her attention between the fire and Ellen, towards whom she seemed to feel more and more kindness, as she saw that she was likely to receive it from no one else. Presently came a knock at the door—"The tea for the young lady," on a waiter. Miss Timmins silently took the tray from the man and shut the door. "Well!" said she to herself—"if that ain't a pretty supper to send up to a child that has gone two hundred miles to-day, and had no breakfast!—a cup of tea, cold enough, I'll warrant,—bread-and-butter enough for a bird,—and two little slices of ham as thick as a wafer!—well, I just wish Mrs. Dunscombe had to eat it herself, and nothing else!—I'm not going to wake her up for that, I know, till I see whether something better ain't to be had for love or money. So just you sleep on, darling, till I see what I can do for you."

In great indignation, downstairs went Miss Timmins; and at the foot of the stairs she met a rosy-cheeked, pleasant-faced girl coming up.

"Are you the chambermaid?" said Timmins.

"I'm *one* of the chambermaids," said the girl, smiling; "there's three of us in this house, dear."

"Well, I am a stranger here," said Timmins, "but I want you to help me, and I am sure you will. I've got a dear little girl upstairs that I want some supper for—she's a sweet child, and she's under the care of some proud folks here in the tea-room that think it too much trouble to look at her; and they've sent her up about supper enough

for a mouse,—and she's half-starving; she lost her breakfast this morning by their ugliness. Now ask one of the waiters to give me something nice for her, will you? there's a good girl."

"James!" said the girl in a loud whisper to one of the waiters who was crossing the hall. He instantly stopped and came towards them, tray in hand, and making several extra polite bows as he drew near.

"What's on the supper-table, James?" said the smiling damsel.

"Everything that ought to be there, Miss Johns," said the man with another flourish.

"Come, stop your nonsense," said the girl, "and tell me quick—I'm in a hurry."

"It's a pleasure to perform your commands, Miss Johns. I'll give you the whole bill of fare. There's a very fine beefsteak, trussed chickens, stewed oysters, sliced ham, cheese, preserved quinces, with the usual complement of bread and toast and muffins, and dough-nuts, and new-year cake, and plenty of butter,—likewise salt and pepper, — likewise tea and coffee, and sugar,—likewise——"

"Hush!" said the girl. "Do stop will you?"—and then laughing and turning to Miss Timmins, she added, "What will you have?"

"I guess I'll have some of the chickens and oysters," said Timmins; "that will be the nicest for her,—and a muffin or two."

"Now, James, do you hear?" said the chambermaid; "I want you to get me now, right away, a nice little supper of chickens and oysters and a muffin—it's for a lady upstairs. Be as quick as you can."

"I should be very happy to execute impossibilities for you, Miss Johns, but Mrs. Custers is at the table herself."

"Very well—that's nothing—she'll think it's for somebody upstairs—and so it is."

"Ay, but the upstairs people is Tim's business—I should be hauled over the coals directly."

"Then ask Tim, will you? How slow you are! Now, James, if you don't, I won't speak to you again."

"Till to-morrow? I couldn't stand that. It shall be done, Miss Johns, instantum."

Bowing and smiling, away went James, leaving the girls giggling on the staircase and highly gratified.

"He always does what I want him to," said the good-humoured chambermaid, "but he generally makes a fuss about it first. He'll be back directly with what you want."

Till he came, Miss Timmins filled up the time with telling her new friend as much as she knew about Ellen and Ellen's hardships; with

which Miss Johns was so much interested that she declared she must go up and see her ; and when James in a few minutes returned with a tray of nice things, the two women proceeded together to Mrs. Dunscombe's room. Ellen had moved so far as to put herself on the floor with her head on the cushion for a pillow, but she was as sound asleep as ever.

"Just see now!" said Timmins ; "there she lies on the floor—enough to give her her death of cold ; poor child, she's tired to death ; and Mrs. Dunscombe made her walk up from the steanboat to-night rather than do it herself ; I declare I wished the coach would break down, only for the other folks. I am glad I have got a good supper for her though,—thank you, Miss Johns."

"And I'll tell you what, I'll go and get you some nice hot tea," said the chambermaid, who was quite touched by the sight of Ellen's little pale face.

"Thank you," said Timmins, "you're a darling. This is as cold as a stone."

While the chambermaid went forth on her kind errand, Timmins stooped down by the little sleeper's side. "Miss Ellen!" she said, "Miss Ellen!—wake up, dear—wake up and get some supper—come! you'll feel a great deal better for it—you shall sleep as much as you like afterwards."

Slowly Ellen raised herself and opened her eyes. "Where am I?" she asked, looking bewildered.

"Here, dear," said Timmins ; "wake up and eat something—it will do you good."

With a sigh poor Ellen arose and came to the fire.

"You're tired to death, ain't you?" said Timmins.

"Not quite," said Ellen. "I shouldn't mind that if my legs would not ache so—and my head too."

"Now, I'm sorry," said Timmins, "but your head will be better for eating, I know. See here—I've got you some nice chicken and oysters—and I'll make this muffin hot for you by the fire ; and here comes your tea. Now, Miss Ellen, dear, just you put yourself on that low chair, and I'll fix you off."

Ellen thanked her and did as she was told. Timmins brought another chair to her side, and placed the tray with her supper upon it, and prepared her muffin and tea ; and having fairly seen Ellen begin to eat, she next took off her shoes, and seating herself on the carpet before her, she made her lap the resting place for Ellen's feet, chafing them in her hands and heating them at the fire, saying there was

nothing like rubbing and roasting to get rid of the leg-ache. By the help of the supper, the fire, and Timmins, Ellen mended rapidly. With tears in her eyes, she thanked the latter for her kindness.

"Now, just don't say one word about that," said Timmins; "I never was famous for kindness, as I know; but people must be kind sometimes in their lives,—unless they happen to be made of stone, which I believe some people are. You feel better, don't you?"

"A great deal," said Ellen. "Oh, if I only could go to bed now!"

"And you shall," said Timmins. "I know about your bed, and I'll go right away and have it brought in." And away she went.

While she was gone, Ellen drew from her pocket her little hymn-book, to refresh herself with looking at it. How quickly and freshly it brought back to her mind the friend who had given it, and his conversations with her, and the resolve she had made; and again Ellen's whole heart offered the prayer she had repeated many times that day—

"Open my heart, Lord, enter in;
Slay every foe, and conquer sin."

Her head was still bent upon her little book when Timmins entered. Timmins was not alone; Miss Johns and a little cot bedstead came in with her. The latter was put at the foot of Mrs. Dunscombe's bed, and speedily made up by the chambermaid, while Timmins undressed Ellen, and very soon all the sorrows and vexations of the day were forgotten in a sound, refreshing sleep. But not till she had removed her little hymn-book from the pocket of her frock to a safe station under her pillow; it was with her hand upon it that Ellen went to sleep, and it was in her hand still when she was waked the next morning.

The next day was spent in a wearisome stage-coach, over a rough, jolting road. Ellen's companions did nothing to make her way pleasant, but she sweetened theirs with her sugar-plums. Somewhat mollified, perhaps, after that, Miss Margaret condescended to enter into conversation with her, and Ellen underwent a thorough cross-examination as to all her own and her parents' affairs, past, present, and future, and likewise as to all that could be known of her yesterday's friend, till she was heartily worried and out of patience.

It was just five o'clock when they reached her stopping-place. Ellen knew of no particular house to go to; so Mrs. Dunscombe set her down at the door of the principal inn of the town, called the "Star," of Thirlwall.

The driver snapped his whip, and away went the stage again, and she was left standing alone beside her trunk before the piazza of the inn, watching Timmins, who was looking back at her out of the stage window, nodding and waving good-bye.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LITTLE QUEEN IN THE ARM-CHAIR.

ELLEN had been whirled along over the roads for so many hours,—the rattle of the stage-coach had filled her ears for so long, —that now, suddenly still and quiet, she felt half-stunned. She stood with a kind of dreamy feeling, looking after the departing stage-coach. In it there were three people whose faces she knew, and she could not count a fourth within many a mile. One of those was a friend, too, as the fluttering handkerchief of poor Miss Timmins gave token still. Yet Ellen did not wish herself back in the coach, although she continued to stand and gaze after it as it rattled off at a great rate down the little street, till the horses making a sudden turn to the right it disappeared round a corner. Still for a minute Ellen watched the whirling cloud of dust it had left behind; but then the feeling of strangeness and loneliness came over her, and her heart sank. She cast a look up and down the street. The afternoon was lovely; the slant beams of the setting sun came back from gilded windows, and the houses and chimney-tops of the little town were in a glow. There was no sign of her having been expected: nobody was waiting to meet her. What was to be done next? Ellen had not the slightest idea.

Her heart growing fainter and fainter, she turned again to the inn. A tall, awkward young countryman, with a cap set on one side of his head, was busying himself with sweeping off the floor of the piazza, but in a very leisurely manner; and between every two strokes of his broom he was casting long looks at Ellen, evidently wondering who she was, and what she could want there.

"Will you please to tell me," said Ellen, "if Miss Emerson is here?"

"Miss Emerson?" said he,— "what Miss Emerson?"

"I don't know,—Miss Emerson that lives not far from Thirlwall."

Eyeing Ellen from head to foot, the man then trailed his broom into the house. Ellen followed him.

"Mr. Forbes!" said he, "Mr. Forbes! do you know anything of Miss Emerson?"

"What Miss Emerson?" said another man, with a big red face and a big round body, showing himself in a doorway which he nearly filled.

"Miss Emerson that lives a little way out of town."

"Miss Fortune Emerson? yes, I know her. What of her?"

"Has she been here to-day?"

"Here? what, in town? No—not as I've seen or heard. Why, who wants her?"

"This little girl."

And the man with the broom stepping back, disclosed Ellen to the view of the red-faced landlord. He advanced a step or two towards her.

"What do you want with Miss Fortune, little one?" said he.

"I expected she would meet me here, sir," said Ellen.

"Where have you come from?"

"From New York."

"The stage set her down just now," put in the other man.

"And you thought Miss Fortune would meet you, did you?"

"Yes, sir; she was to meet me and take me home."

"Take you home! Are you going to Miss Fortune's home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why you don't belong to her any way, do you?"

"No, sir," said Ellen, "but she's my aunt."

"She's your what?"

"My aunt, sir,—my father's sister."

"Your father's sister! You aren't the daughter of Morgan Montgomery, be you?"

"Yes I am," said Ellen, half smiling.

"And you are come to make a visit to Miss Fortune, eh?"

"Yes," said Ellen, smiling no longer.

"And Miss Fortune hasn't come up to meet you;—that's real shabby of her; and how to get you down there to-night, I am sure is more than I can tell." And he shouted, "Wife!"

"What's the matter, Mr. Forbes?" said a fat landlady, appearing in the doorway, which she filled near as well as her husband would have done.

"Look here," said Mr. Forbes, "here's Morgan Montgomery's daughter come to pay a visit to her aunt, Fortune Emerson. Don't you think she'll be glad to see her?"

Mr. Forbes put this question with rather a curious look at his wife. She didn't answer him. She only looked at Ellen, looked grave, and

gave a queer little nod of her head, which meant, Ellen could not make out what.

"Now, what's to be done?" continued Mr. Forbes. "Miss Fortune was to have come up to meet her, but she ain't here, and I don't know how in the world I can take the child down there to-night. The horses are both out to plough, you know; and besides, the tire is come off that waggon wheel. I couln't possibly use it. And then it's a great question in my mind what Miss Fortune would say to me. I should get paid, I s'pose?"

"Yes, you'd get paid," said his wife, with another little shake of her head; but whether it would be the kind of pay you'd like, I don't know."

"Well, what's to be done, wife? Keep the child over night, and send her down yonder?"

"No," said Mrs. Forbes, "I'll tell you. I think I saw Van Brunt go by two or three hours ago with the ox-cart, and I guess he's somewhere up town yet; I ha'n't seen him go back. He can take the child home with him. Sam!" shouted Mrs. Forbes,—"Sam!—here!—Sam, run up street directly, and see if you see Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart standing anywhere—and ask him to stop here before he goes home. Now hurry!—and don't run over him and then come back and tell me he ain't in town."

Mrs. Forbes herself followed Sam to the door, and cast an exploring look in every direction.

"I don't see no signs of him,—up nor down," said she, returning to Ellen; "but I'm pretty sure he ain't gone home. Come in here—come in here, dear, and make yourself comfortable; it'll be a while yet maybe afore Mr. Van Brunt comes, but he'll be along by-and-by."

She opened a door, and Ellen folloyed her into a large kitchen, where a fire was burning that showed wood must be plentiful in those regions. Mrs. Forbes placed a low chair for her on the hearth, but herself remained standing by the side of the fire, looking earnestly and with a good deal of interest upon the little stranger. Ellen drew her white bonnet from her head, and sitting down with a wearied air, gazed sadly into the flames that were shedding their light upon her.

"Are you going to stop a good while with Miss Fortune?" said Mrs. Forbes.

"I don't know, ma'am, yes, I believe so," said Ellen, faintly.

"Ha'n't you got no mother?" asked Mrs. Forbes, suddenly, after a pause.

"Oh, yes!" said Ellen, looking up. But the question had touched the sore spot. Her head sank on her hands, and "Oh mamma!" was uttered with a bitterness that even Mrs. Forbes could feel.

"Now what made me ask you that!" said she. "Don't cry!—don't love; poor little dear! you're as pale as a sheet; you're tired, I know—ain't you? Now cheer up, do—I can't bear to see you cry. You've come a great ways to-day, ha'n't you?"

Ellen nodded her head, but could give no answer.

"I know what will do you good," said Mrs. Forbes presently getting up from the crouching posture she had taken to comfort Ellen; "you want something to eat,—that's the matter. I'll warrant you're half-starved; no wonder you feel bad. Poor little thing! you shall have something good directly."

And away she bustled to get it. Left alone, Ellen's tears flowed a few minutes very fast. She felt forlorn; and she was besides, as Mrs. Forbes opined, both tired and faint. But she did not wish to be found weeping, she checked her tears, and was sitting again quietly before the fire when the landlady returned.

Mrs. Forbes had a great bowl of milk in one hand, and a plate of bread in the other, which she placed on the kitchen table, and setting a chair, called Ellen to come and partake of it.

"Come, dear,—here is something that will do you good. I thought there was a piece of pie in the buttery, and so there was, but Mr. Forbes must have got hold of it, for it ain't there now; and there ain't a bit of cake in the house for you; but I thought maybe you would like this as well as anything. Come?"

Ellen thanked her, but said she did not want anything.

"Oh, yes, you do," said Mrs. Forbes; "I know better. You're as pale as I don't know what. Come! this'll put roses in your cheeks. Don't you like bread and milk?"

"Yes, very much indeed, ma'am," said Ellen, "but I'm not hungry." She rose, however, and came to the table.

"Oh, well, try to eat a bit just to please me. It's real good country milk—not a bit of cream off. You don't get such milk as that in the city, I guess. That's right! I see the roses coming back to your cheeks already. Is your pa in New York now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You expect your pa and ma up to Thirlwall by-and-by, don't you?"

"No, ma'am."

Mrs. Forbes was surprised, and longed to ask why not, and what Ellen had come for; but the shade that had passed over her face as

she answered the last question warned the landlady she was getting upon dangerous ground.

"Does your aunt expect you to-night?"

"I believe so, ma'am,—I don't know,—she was to have met me; papa said he would write."

"Oh, well! maybe something hindered her from coming. It's no matter; you'll get home just as well. Mr. Van Brunt will be here soon, I guess; it's most time for him to be along."

She went to the front door to look out for him, but returned without any news. A few minutes passed in silence, for though full of curiosity, the good landlady dared not ask what she wanted to know, for fear of again exciting the sorrow of her little companion. She contented herself with looking at Ellen, who on her part, much rested and refreshed, had turned from the table, and was again, though somewhat less sadly, gazing into the fire.

Presently the great wooden clock struck half-past five, with a whirling, rickety voice, for all the world like a hoarse grasshopper. Ellen at first wondered where it came from, and was looking at the clumsy machine that reached nearly from the floor of the kitchen to the ceiling, when a door at the other end of the room opened, and "Good-day, Mrs. Forbes," in a rough but not unpleasant voice, brought her head quickly round in that direction. There stood a large, strong-built man, with an ox-whip in his hand. He was well-made and rather handsome, but there was something of heaviness in the air of both face and person mixed with his certainly good-humoured expression. His dress was as rough as his voice—a coarse grey frock-coat, green velvet pantaloons, and a fur cap that had seen its best days some time ago.

"Good-day, Mrs. Forbes," said this personage; "Sam said you wanted me to stop as I went along."

"Ah, how d'y'e do, Mr. Van Brunt?" said the landlady, rising; "you've got the ox-cart here with you, ha'n't you?"

"Yes, I've got the ox-cart," said the person addressed. "I came in town for a barrel of flour, and then the near ox had lost both his fore shoes, and I had to go over there, and Hammersley has kept me a precious long time. What's wanting, Mrs. Forbes? I can't stop."

"You've no load in the cart, have you?" said the landlady.

"No; I should have had though, but Miller had no shorts nor fresh flour, nor won't till next week. What's to go down, Mrs. Forbes?"

"The nicest load ever you carried, Mr. Van Brunt. Here's a little lady come to stay with Miss Fortune. She's a daughter of Captain Montgomery, Miss Fortune's brother, you know. She came by the stage a little while ago, and the thing is now to get her down to-night. She can go in the cart, can't she?"

Mr. Van Brunt looked a little doubtful, and pulling off his cap with one hand, while he scratched his head with the other, he examined Ellen from head to foot; much as if she had been some great bale of goods, and he were considering whether his cart would hold her or not.

"Well," said he at length, "I don't know but she can; but there ain't nothing on 'arth for her to sit down upon."

"Oh, never mind; I'll fix that," said Mrs. Forbes. "Is there any straw in the bottom of the cart?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, I'll fix it," said Mrs. Forbes. "You get her trunk into the cart, will you, Mr. Van Brunt? and I'll see to the rest."

Mr. Van Brunt moved off without another word to do what was desired of him, apparently quite confounded at having a passenger instead of his more wonted load of bags and barrels. And his face still continued to wear the singular doubtful expression it had put on at first hearing the news. Ellen's trunk was quickly hoisted in, however; and Mrs. Forbes presently appeared with a little arm-chair, which Mr. Van Brunt, with an approving look, bestowed in the cart, planting it with its back against the trunk to keep it steady. Mrs. Forbes, then raising herself on tiptoe by the side of the cart, took a view of the arrangements.

"That won't do yet," said she; "her feet will be cold on that bare floor, and 'tain't over clean neither. Here, Sally! run up and fetch me that piece of carpet you'll find lying at the top of the back stairs. Now, hurry! Now, Mr. Van Brunt, I depend upon you to get my things back again; will you see and bring 'em the first time you come in town?"

"I'll see about it. But what if I can't get hold of them?" answered the person addressed with a half smile.

"Oh," said Mrs. Forbes, with another, "I leave that to you; you have your ways and means. Now, just spread this carpet down nicely under her chair; and then she'll be fixed. Now, my darling, you'll ride like a queen. But how are you going to get in? Will you let Mr. Van Brunt lift you up?"

Ellen's "Oh, ffo, ma'an, if you please!" was accompanied with such an evident shrinking from the proposal, that Mrs. Forbes did

not press it. A chair was brought from the kitchen, and by making a long step from it to the top of the wheel, and then to the edge of the cart, Ellen was at length safely stowed in her place. Kind Mrs. Forbes then stretched herself up over the side of the cart to shake hands with her and bid her good-bye, telling her again she would ride like a queen. Ellen answered only "Good-bye, ma'am"; but it was said with a look of so much sweetness, and eyes swimming half in sadness and half in gratefulness, that the good landlady could not forget it.

"I do think," said she, when she went back to her husband, "that is the dearest little thing, about, I ever did see."

"Humph!" said her husband, "I reckon Miss Fortune will think so too."

The doubtful look came back to Mrs. Forbes' face, and with another little grave shake of her head, she went into the kitchen.

"How kind she is! how good everybody is to me," thought little Ellen, as she moved off in state in her chariot drawn by oxen.

Slowly, very slowly, the good oxen drew the cart and the little queen in the arm-chair out of the town, and they entered upon the open country. The sun had already gone down when they left the inn, and the glow of his setting had faded a good deal by the time they got quite out of the town; but light enough was left still to delight Ellen with the pleasant look of the country. It was a lovely evening, and quiet as summer; not a breath stirring. The houses were very scattered; in the whole way they passed but few. Ellen's heart regularly began to beat when they came in sight of one, and "I wonder if that is Aunt Fortune's house!"—"perhaps it is!"—or, "I hope it is not!" were the thoughts that rose in her mind. But slowly the oxen brought her abreast of the houses, one after another, and slowly they passed on beyond, and there was no sign of getting home yet. The shades gathered on field and hill: everything grew brown and then dusky; and then Ellen was obliged to content herself with what was very near, for farther than that she could only see dim outlines. She began again to think of their slow travelling, and to wonder that Mr. Van Brunt could be content with it. Apparently, however, he too now thought it might be as well to make a little haste, for he thundered out some orders to his oxen, accompanied with two or three strokes of his heavy lash, which, though not cruel by any means, went to Ellen's heart.

"Them lazy critters won't go fast anyhow," said he to Ellen, "they will take their own time; it ain't no use to cut them."

"Oh, no! pray don't, if you please!" said Ellen, in a voice of earnest entreaty.

"Tain't fair neither," continued Mr. Van Brunt, lashing his great whip from side to side without touching anything. "I have seen critters that would take any quantity of whipping to make them go, but them 'ere ain't of that kind; they'll work as long as they can stand, poor fellows!"

There was a little silence, during which Ellen eyed her rough charioteer, not knowing exactly what to make of him.

"I guess this is the first time you ever rid in an ox-cart, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Ellen; "I never saw one before."

"Ha'n't you never seen an ox-cart! Well, how do you like it?"

"I like it very much indeed. Have we much farther to go before we get to Aunt Fortune's house?"

"Aunt Fortune's house! a pretty good bit yet. You see that mountain over there?" pointing with his whip to a hill directly west of them, and about a mile distant.

"Yes," said Ellen.

"That's the Nose. Then you see that other?" pointing to one that lay some two miles farther south; "Miss Fortune's house is just this side of that; it's all of two miles from here."

And urged by this recollection, he again scolded and cheered the patient oxen, who for the most part kept on their steady way without any reminder.

"So you're Miss Fortune's niece, eh?"

"Yes," said Ellen.

"Well," said Mr. Van Brunt, with a desperate attempt at being complimentary, "I shouldn't mind if you was mine too."

Ellen was somewhat astounded, and so utterly unable to echo the wish, that she said nothing. She did not know it, but Mr. Van Brunt had made, for him, most extraordinary efforts at sociability. Having quite exhausted himself, he now mounted into the cart and sat silent, only now and then uttering energetic "Gee's!" and "Haw's!" which greatly excited Ellen's wonderment. She discovered they were meant for the ears of the oxen, but more than that she could not make out.

They plodded along very slowly, and the evening fell fast. As they left behind the hill which Mr. Van Brunt had called "the Nose," they could see, through an opening in the mountains, a bit of the western horizon, and some brightness still lingering there; but it was soon lost from view, and darkness veiled the whole country. Ellen could

amuse herself no longer with looking about ; she could see nothing very clearly but the outline of Mr. Van Brunt's broad back, just before her. But the stars had come out ; and, brilliant and clear, they were looking down upon her with their thousand eyes. Ellen's heart jumped when she saw them with a mixed feeling of pleasure and sadness. She thought of her dear far-off mother, how long it was already since she had seen her ; faster and faster the tears dropped ; and then she thought of that glorious One who had made the stars, and was above them all, and who could and did see her mother and her, though ever so far apart, and could hear and bless them both. The little face was no longer upturned—it was buried in her hands, and bowed to her lap, and tears streamed as she prayed that God would bless her dear mother and take care of her. Greatly comforted at last, at having as it were laid over the care of her mother upon One who was able, she thought of herself, and her late resolution to serve Him. She was in the same mind still. She could not call herself a Christian yet, but she was resolved to be one ; and she earnestly asked the Saviour she sought to make her and keep her His child. And then Ellen felt happy.

Quiet, and weariness, and even drowsiness succeeded. It was well the night was still, for it had grown quite cool, and a breeze would have gone through and through Ellen's nankeen coat. As it was she began to be chilly, when Mr. Van Brunt, who since he got into the cart had made no remarks except to his oxen, turned round a little and spoke to her again.

"It's only a little bit of way we've got to go now," said he ; "we're turning the corner."

The words seemed to shoot through Ellen's heart. She was wide awake instantly, and quite warm ; and leaning forward in her little chair, she strove to pierce the darkness on either hand of her, to see whereabouts the house stood, and how things looked. She could discern nothing but misty shadows and outlines of she could not tell what, the starlight was too dim to reveal anything to a stranger.

"There's the house," said Mr. Van Brunt, after a few minutes more, "do you see it yonder?"

Ellen strained her eyes, but could make out nothing, not even a glimpse of white. She sat back in her chair, her heart beating violently. Presently Mr. Van Brunt jumped down and opened a gate at the side of the road, and with a great deal of "gee"-ing the oxen turned to the right, and drew the cart a little way up-hill, then stopped on what seemed to be level ground.

"Here we are!" cried Mr. Van Brunt, as he threw his whip on the ground, "and late enough! You must be tired of that little arm-chair by this time. Come to the side of the cart, and I'll lift you down."

Poor Ellen! There was no help for it. She came to the side of the cart, and taking her in his arms her rough chariotteer set her very gently and carefully on the ground.

"There!" said he, "now you can run right in; do you see that little gate?"

"No," said Ellen, "I can't see anything."

"Well, come here," said he, "and I'll show you." And he opened a little wicket, which Ellen managed to stumble through.

"Now," said he, "go straight up to that door yonder, and open it, and you'll see where to go. Don't knock, but just pull the latch and go in."

And he went off to his oxen. Her trembling fingers found the latch, lifted it, and she entered. All was dark there; but at the right a window showed light glimmering within. Ellen made toward it, and groping, came to another door-latch. This was big and clumsy; however, she managed it, and pushing open the heavy door, went in.

It was a good-sized, cheetful-looking kitchen. A fine fire was burning in the enormous fire-place. The supper-table was set, and with its snow-white table-cloth and shining furniture, looked very comfortable indeed. But the only person there was an old woman, sitting by the side of the fire, with her back towards Ellen. She seemed to be knitting, but did not move nor look round. Ellen had come a step or two into the room, and there she stood, unable to speak or to go any farther. "Can that be Aunt Fortune?" she thought; "she can't be as old as that!"

In another minute a door opened at her right, just behind the old woman's back, and a second figure appeared at the top of a flight of stairs which led down from the kitchen. She came in, shutting the door behind her with her foot; and indeed both hands were full, one holding a lamp and a knife, and the other a plate of butter. The sight of Ellen stopped her short.

"What is this? and what do you leave the door open for, child?" she said.

She advanced towards it, plate and lamp in hand, and setting her back against the door, shut it vigorously.

"Who are you? and what's wanting?"

"I am Ellen Montgomery, ma'am," said Ellen, timidly.

"What?" said the lady, with some emphasis.

"Didn't you expect me, ma'am?" said Ellen: "papa said he would write."

"Why, is this Ellen Montgomery?" said Miss Fortune, apparently forced to the conclusion that it must be.

"Yes, ma'am," said Ellen.

Miss Fortune went to the table and put the butter and the lamp in their places.

"Come," she said to Ellen, "take off your coat and come to the table. You must be hungry by this time. It's a good while since you had your dinner, ain't it? Come, mother."

The old lady rose, and Miss Fortune, taking her chair, set it by the side of the table next the fire. Ellen was opposite to her, and now, for the first time, the old lady seemed to know that she was in the room. She looked at her very attentively, but with an expressionless gaze which Ellen did not like to meet, though otherwise her face was calm and pleasant.

"Who is that?" enquired the old lady presently of Miss Fortune, in a half whisper.

"That's Morgan's daughter," was the answer.

"Morgan's daughter! Has Morgan a daughter?"

"Why, yes, mother; don't you remember I told you a month ago he was going to send her here?"

The old lady turned again with a half shake of her head towards Ellen. "Morgan's daughter," she repeated to herself softly; "she's a pretty little girl, -- very pretty. Will you come round here and give me a kiss, dear?"

Ellen submitted. The old lady folded her in her arms and kissed her affectionately. "That's your grandmother, Ellen," said Miss Fortune, as Ellen went back to her seat.

Ellen had no words to answer. Her aunt saw her weary, down look, and soon after supper proposed to take her upstairs. Ellen gladly followed her. Miss Fortune showed her to her room, and first asking if she wanted anything, left her to herself. It was a relief. Ellen's heart had been brimful and ready to run over for some time, but the tears could not come then. They did not now, till she had undressed and laid her weary little body on the bed; then they broke forth in an agony. "She did not kiss me! she didn't say she was glad to see me!" thought poor Ellen. But weariness this time was too much for sorrow and disappointment. It was but a few minutes, and Ellen's brow was calm again, and her eyelids still, and with the tears wet upon her cheeks, she was fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

MUD—AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE morning sun was shining full and strong in Ellen's eyes when she awoke. Bewildered at the strangeness of everything around her, she raised herself on her elbow, and took a long look at her new home. It could not help but seem cheerful. The bright beams of sunlight streaming in through the windows lighted on the wall and the old wainscoting, and paintless and rough as they were, Nature's own gilding more than made amends for their want of comeliness. Still Ellen was not much pleased with the result of her survey. The room was good-sized, and perfectly neat and clean; it had two large windows opening to the east, through which, morning by morning, the sun looked in—that was another blessing. But the floor was without the sign of a carpet, and the bare boards looked to Ellen very comfortless. The hard-finished walls were not very smooth nor particularly white. The doors and wood-work, though very neat, and even carved with some attempt at ornament, had never known the touch of paint, and had grown in the course of years to be of a light-brown colour. The room was very bare of furniture too. A dressing-table, pier-table, or whatnot, stood between the windows, but it was only a half-circular top of pine board set upon three very long, bare-looking legs—altogether of a most awkward and unhappy appearance, Ellen thought, and quite too high for her to use with any comfort. No glass hung over it, nor anywhere else. On the north side of the room was a fire-place; against the opposite wall stood Ellen's trunk and two chairs; that was all, except the cot-bed she was lying on, and which had its place opposite the windows.

She was still leaning on her elbow, looking around her with a rather discontented face, when some door being opened downstairs, a great noise of hissing and sputtering came to her ears, and presently after there stole to her nostrils a steaming odour of something very savoury from the kitchen. It said as plainly as any dressing-bell that she had better get up. So up she jumped, and set about the business of dressing with great alacrity. She went on quick with the business of the toilet. But when it came to the washing, she suddenly discovered that there were no conveniences for it in her room—no sign of picher or basin, or stand to hold them. Ellen was slightly dismayed; but presently recollected her arrival had not been looked for so soon, and probably the preparations for it had not been completed. So she

finished dressing, and then set out to find her way to the kitchen. On opening the door, there was a little landing-place from which the stairs descended just in front of her, and at the left hand another door, which she supposed must lead to her aunt's room. At the foot of the stairs Ellen found herself in a large square room or hall, for one of its doors on the east opened to the outer air, and was in fact the front door of the house. Another Ellen tried on the south side; it would not open. A third, under the stairs, admitted her to the kitchen.

The noise of hissing and sputtering now became quite violent, and the smell of the cooking, to Ellen's fancy, rather too strong to be pleasant. Before a good fire stood Miss Fortune, holding the end of a very long iron handle by which she was kept in communication with a flat vessel sitting on the fire, in which Ellen soon discovered all this noisy and odorous cooking was going on. A tall tin coffee-pot stood on some coals in the corner of the fire-place, and another little iron vessel in front also claimed a share of Miss Fortune's attention, for she every now and then leaned forward to give a stir to whatever was in it, making each time quite a spasmodic effort to do so without quitting her hold of the long handle. Ellen drew near and looked on with great curiosity, and not a little appetite; but Miss Fortune was far too busy to give her more than a passing glance. At length the hissing pan was brought to the hearth for some new arrangement of its contents, and Ellen seized the moment of peace and quiet to say, "Good-morning, Aunt Fortune."

Miss Fortune was crouching by the pan turning her slices of pork. "How do you do this morning?" she answered, without looking up.

Ellen replied that she felt a great deal better.

"Slept warm, did you?" said Miss Fortune, as she set the pan back on the fire. And Ellen could hardly answer, "Quite warm, ma'am," when the hissing and sputtering began again as loud as ever.

"I must wait," thought Ellen, "till this is over before I say what I want to. I can't scream out to ask for a basin and towel."

In a few minutes the pan was removed from the fire, and Miss Fortune went on to take out the brown slices of nicely-fried pork and arrange them in a deep dish, leaving a small quantity of clear fat in the pan. Ellen, who was greatly interested, and observing every step most attentively, settled in her own mind that certainly this would be thrown away, being fit for nothing but the pigs. But Miss Fortune didn't think so, for she darted into some pantry close by, and returning with a cup of cream in her hand emptied it all into the pork fat. Then she

ran into the pantry again for a little round tin box, with a cover full of holes, and shaking this gently over the pan, a fine white shower of flour fell upon the cream. The pan was then replaced on the fire and stirred; and to Ellen's astonishment, the whole changed, as if by magic, to a thick, stiff, white froth. It was not till Miss Fortune was carefully pouring this over the fried slices in the dish that Ellen suddenly recollected that breakfast was ready, and she was not.

"Aunt Fortune," she said, timidly, "I haven't washed yet—there's no basin in my room."

Miss Fortune made no answer nor gave any sign of hearing; she went on dishing up breakfast. Ellen waited a few minutes.

"Will you please, ma'am, to show me where I can wash myself?"

"Yes," said Miss Fortune, suddenly standing erect, "you'll have to go down to the spout."

"The spout, ma'am," said Ellen; "what's that?"

"You'll know it when you see it, I guess," answered her aunt, again stooping over her preparations. But in another moment she arose and said, "Just open that door there behind you, and go down the stairs and out at the door, and you'll see where it is, and what it is too."

Ellen still lingered. "Would you be so good as to give me a towel, ma'am?" she said, timidly.

Miss Fortune dashed past her and out of another door, whence she presently returned with a clean towel which she threw over Ellen's arm, and then went back to her work.

Opening the door by which she had first seen her aunt enter the night before, Ellen went down a steep flight of steps, and found herself in a lower kitchen, intended for common purposes. It had no furniture but a table and two chairs. The thick heavy door stood open. Passing out, Ellen looked around her for water. She soon spied, a few yards distant, a little stream of water pouring from the end of a pipe or trough raised about a foot and a half from the ground, and a well-worn path leading to it left no doubt of its being "the spout." But when she had reached it, Ellen was in no small puzzle as to how she should manage. The water was clear and bright, and poured very fast into a shallow wooden trough underneath, whence it ran off into the meadow and disappeared.

"But what shall I do without a basin?" thought Ellen, "I can't catch any water in my hands, it runs too fast. If I only could get my face under there—that would be fine."

Very carefully and cautiously she tried it, but the continual spattering of the water had made the board on which she stood so slippery

that before her face could reach the stream she came very near tumbling headlong, and so taking more of a cold bath than she wished for. So she contented herself with the drops her hands could bring to her face,—a scanty supply; but those drops were deliciously cold and fresh. The morning air came playing about her; its cool breath was on her cheek with health in its touch, and the early sun was shining on tree and meadow and hill. She thought it was the loveliest place she ever had seen. Ellen stood gazing and wondering, drinking in the fresh air, hope and spirits rising every minute, when she suddenly recollected breakfast! She hurried in. As she expected, her aunt was at the table; but to her surprise, and not at all to her gratification, there was Mr. Van Brunt at the other end of it, eating away, very much at home indeed. In silent dismay Ellen drew her chair to the side of the table.

"Did you find the spout?" asked Miss Fortune.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, how do you like it?"

"Oh, I like it very much indeed," said Ellen. "I think it is beautiful."

Miss Fortune's face rather softened at this, and she gave Ellen an abundant supply of all that was on the table. Her journey, the bracing air, and her cool morning wash, altogether, had made Ellen very sharp, and she did justice to the breakfast. Ellen rose from the table when she had finished, and stood a few minutes thoughtfully by the fire.

"Aunt Fortune," she said at length timidly, "if you've no objection, I should like to go and take a good look all about."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Fortune, "go where you like; I'll give you a week to do what you please with yourself."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Ellen, as she ran off for her bonnet.

Returning quickly with her white bonnet, Ellen opened the heavy kitchen door by which she had entered last night, and went out. She found herself in a kind of long shed. A few yards from the shed door was the little gate through which she had stumbled in the dark, and outside of that Ellen stood still a while. It was a fair, pleasant day, and the country scene she looked upon was very pretty. Before her, at a little distance, rose the great gable end of the barn, and a long row of outhouses stretched away from it towards the left. The ground was strewn thick with chips; and the reason was not hard to find, for a little way off, under an old stunted apple-tree, lay a huge log, well chipped on the upper surface, with the axe resting against it; and close by were some sticks of wood both chopped and unchopped. To

the right the ground descended gently to a beautiful plane meadow, skirted on either side by a row of fine apple-trees. The smooth green flat tempted Ellen to a run, but she had not gone far when she all at once plunged into the mire. The green grass growing there had looked fair enough, but there was running water, and black mud under the green grass, she found to her sorrow. Her shoes, her stockings, were full. What was to be done now? However, she got out of the slough, and wiping her shoes as well as she could on the grass, she hastened back to the house.

The kitchen was all put in order, the hearth swept, the irons at the fire, and Miss Fortune just pinning her ironing blanket on the table.

"Well, what's the matter?" she said, when she saw Ellen's face; but as her glance reached the floor, her brow darkened. "Mercy on me!" she exclaimed, with slow emphasis, "what on earth have you been about? where have you been?"

Ellen explained.

"Well, you *have* made a figure of yourself! Sit down!" said her aunt, shortly, as she thrust a chair down on the hearth before the fire; "I should have thought you'd have had wit enough at your age to keep out of the ditch."

"I didn't see any ditch," said Ellen, "and I wanted to find out where the water came from."

"Well, you've found out enough for one day I hope. Just look at those stockings! Ha'n't you got never a pair of coloured stockings, that you must go poking into the mud with white ones?"

"No, ma'am."

"Do you mean to say you never wore any but white ones at home?"

"Yes, ma'am; I never had any others."

Miss Fortune's thoughts seemed too much for speech, from the way in which she jumped up and went off without saying anything more. She presently came back with an old pair of grey socks, which she bade Ellen put on as soon as her feet were dry.

"How many of those white stockings have you?" she said.

"Mamma bought me half-a-dozen pair of new ones just before I came away, and I had as many as that of old ones besides."

"Well, now go up to your trunk and bring 'em all down to me. There's a pair of old slippers you can put on till your shoes are dry," she said, flinging them to her; "they *arn't* much too big for you."

"They're not much too big for the *socks*, they're a great deal too big for me," thought Ellen. But she said nothing. She gathered all her stockings together and brought them downstairs.

"Now you may run out to the barn, to Mr. Van Brunt, you'll find him there, and tell him I want him to bring me some white maple bark, when he comes home to dinner.

Away went Ellen, but in a few minutes came back. "I can't get in," she said. "Those great doors are shut, and I can't open them. I knocked, but nobody came."

"Knock at a barn door!" said Miss Fortune. "You must go in at the little cow-house door, and go round. He's in the lower barn-floor."

The barn stood lower than the level of the chip-yard, from which a little bridge led to the great doorway of the second floor. Passing down the range of outhouses, Ellen came to the little door her aunt had spoken of. She peeped in; the cow-house was perfectly empty; and cautiously, and with many a fearful glance to the right and left, lest some terrible horned animal should present itself, Ellen made her way across the cow-house, and through the barn-yard, to the lower barn-floor. The door of this stood wide open. Ellen looked with wonder and pleasure when she got in. It was an immense room—the sides showed nothing but hay up to the ceiling, except here and there an enormous upright post; the floor was perfectly clean, and a pleasant sweet smell was there. But no Mr. Van Brunt. She looked about for him in vain.

"Hilloa! what's wanting?" at length cried the rough voice of Mr. Van Brunt; "have you come out here to help me thrash wheat?"

• Ellen told him what she had come for.

"White maple bark, well," said he, in his slow way, "I'll bring it. I wonder what's in the wind now?"

So Ellen wondered, as she slowly went back to the house; and yet more, when her aunt set her to tacking her stockings together two and two.

"What are you going to do with them, Aunt Fortune?" she at last ventured to say.

"You'll see, when the time comes."

"Mayn't I keep out one pair?" said Ellen, who had a vague notion that by some mysterious means her stockings were to be prevented from ever looking white any more.

"No; just do as I tell you."

• Mr. Van Brunt came at dinner-time with the white maple bark. It was thrown forthwith into a brass kettle of water, which Miss Fortune had already hung over the fire. Ellen felt sure this had something to do with her stockings, but she could ask no questions; and as soon as dinner was over she went up to her room. It didn't look pleasant now.

The sunshine was out of it; and what was more, the sunshine was out of Ellen's heart too. She went to the window and opened it, but there was nothing to keep it open; it slid down again as soon as she let it go. Baffled and sad, she stood looking out on the grass-plot that lay before the door, and the little gate that opened on the lake, and the smooth meadow, and rich broken country beyond. It was a very fair and pleasant scene in the soft sunlight of the last of October; but the charm of it was gone for Ellen; it was dreary. She looked without caring to look, or knowing what she was looking at; she felt the tears rising to her eyes; and sick of the window, turned away. Her eye fell on her trunk; her next thought was of her desk inside of it; and suddenly her heart sprang; "I will write to mamma!" No sooner said than done. The trunk was quickly open, and hasty hands pulled out one thing after another till the desk was reached.

"But what shall I do?" thought she; "there isn't a sign of a table. Oh, what a place! I'll shut my trunk and put it on that."

Kneeling by the side of the trunk, with loving hands Ellen opened her desk. A sheet of paper was drawn from her store, and properly placed before her; the pen dipped in the ink, and at first with a hurried, then with a trembling hand, she wrote, "My dear Mamma." But Ellen's heart had been swelling and swelling, with every letter of those three words, and scarcely was the last "a" finished, when the pen was dashed down, and flinging away from the desk, she threw herself on the floor in a passion of grief. It seemed as if she had her mother again in her arms, and was clinging with a death-grasp not to be parted from her. And then the feeling that she was parted! As much bitter sorrow as a little heart can know was in poor Ellen's now. After a time, however, she rose from the floor and went to her writing again; her heart a little eased by weeping, yet the tears kept coming all the time, and she could not quite keep her paper from being blotted. The first sheet was spoiled before she was aware; she took another.

"MY DEAREST MAMMA,

"It makes me so glad and so sorry to write to you, that I don't know what to do. I want to see you so much, mamma, that it seems to me sometimes as if my heart would break. Oh, mamma, if I could just kiss you once more, I would give anything in the whole world. I can't be happy as long as you are away, and I'm afraid I can't be good either; but I will try. I have so much to say to you, that I don't know where to begin. I am sure my paper will never hold it all. You will want to know about my journey. The first day was on the steam-boat,

you know. I should have had a dreadful time that day, mamma, but for something I'll tell you about. I was sitting on the upper deck, thinking about you, and feeling very badly indeed, when a gentleman came and spoke to me, and asked me what was the matter. Mamma, I can't tell you how kind he was to me. He kept me with him the whole day. He took me all over the boat, and showed me all about a great many things, and he talked to me a great deal. Oh, mamma, how he talked to me. He read in the Bible to me, and explained it, and he tried to make me be a Christian. And oh, mamma, when he was talking to me, how I wanted to do as he said, and I resolved I would. I did, mamma, and I have not forgotten it. I will try indeed, but I am afraid it will be very hard without you or him, or anybody else to help me. You couldn't have been kinder yourself, mamma; he kissed me at night when I bid him good-bye, and I was very sorry indeed. I wish I could see him again. Mamma, I will always love that gentleman. I wish there was somebody here that I could love, but there is not. You will want to know what sort of a person Aunt Fortune is. I think she is very good-looking, or she would be, if her nose was not quite so sharp: but, mamma, I can't tell you what sort of a feeling I have about her; it seems to me as if she was sharp all over. I am sure her eyes are as sharp as two needles. And she don't walk like other people: or at least sometimes. She makes queer little jerks and starts and jumps, and flies about like I don't know what. There's nobody else for me to talk to. I can't like Aunt Fortune much yet, and I am sure she don't like me: but I will try to make her. I have not forgotten what you said to me about that. Oh, dear mamma, I will try to mind everything you ever said to me in your life. I am afraid you won't like what I have written about Aunt Fortune; but indeed I have done nothing to displease her, and I will try not to. If you were only here, mamma, I should say it was the loveliest place I ever saw in my life. Perhaps, after all, I shall feel better, and be quite happy by-and-by; but oh, mamma, how glad I shall be when I get a letter from you. I shall begin to look for it soon, and I think I shall go out of my wits with joy when it comes. I had the funniest ride down here from Thirlvall that you can think; and how do you guess I came? In a cart drawn by oxen. They went so slow we were an age getting here; but I liked it very much. There was a good-natured man driving the oxen, and he was kind to me; but, mamma, what do you think? he eats at the table. I know what you would tell me; you would say I must not mind trifles. Well, I will try not, mamma. Oh, darling mother, I can't think much of anything but you. I think of you the whole time. Who makes tea for you now? Are you

better? Are you going to leave New York soon? It seems dreadfully long since I saw you. I am tired, dear mamma, and cold; and it's getting dark. I must stop. I have a good big room to myself; that is a good thing. I should not like to sleep with Aunt Fortune. Good-night, dear mamma. I wish I could sleep with you once more. Oh, when will that be again, mamma? Good-night. Good-night.

"Your affectionate ELLEN."

The letter finished, was carefully folded, enclosed, and directed; and then with an odd mixture of pleasure and sadness, Ellen lit one of her little wax matches, and sealed it very nicely. She looked at it fondly a minute when it was done, thinking of the clear fingers that would hold and open it; her next movement was to sink her face in her hands, and pray most earnestly for a blessing upon her mother, and help for herself. She was afraid of lingering lest tea should be ready; so, locking up her letter, she went downstairs.

The tea was ready. Miss Fortune and Mr. Van Brunt were at the table, and so was the old lady, whom Ellen had not seen before that day. She quietly drew up her chair to its place.

"Well," said Miss Fortune, "I hope you feel better for your long stay upstairs."

"I do, ma'am," said Ellen; "a great deal better."

"What have you been about?"

"I have been writing, ma'am."

"Writing what?"

"I have been writing to mamma."

Perhaps Miss Fortune heard the trembling of Ellen's voice, or her sharp glance saw the lip quiver and eyelid droop. Something softened her. She spoke in a different tone; asked Ellen if her tea was good; took care she had plenty of the bread and butter, and excellent cheese, which was on the table; and lastly cut her a large piece of the pumpkin pie. Mr. Van Brunt too looked once or twice at Ellen's face as if he thought all was not right there. He was not so sharp as Miss Fortune, but the swollen eyes and tear stains were not quite lost upon him.

After tea, when Mr. Van Brunt was gone, and the tea-things cleared away, Ellen had the pleasure of finding out the mystery of the brass kettle and the white maple bark. The kettle now stood in the chimney corner. Miss Fortune, seating herself before it, threw in all Ellen's stockings except one pair, which she flung over to her, saying, "There—I don't care if you keep that one." Then, tucking up her sleeves to the elbows, she fished up pair after pair out of the kettle, and wringing them

out hung them on chairs to dry. But, as Ellen had opined, they were no longer white, but of a fine slate colour. She looked on in silence, too much vexed to ask questions.

"Well, how do you like that?" said Miss Fortune at length, when she had got two or three chairs round the fire pretty well hung with a display of slate-coloured cotton legs.

"I don't like it at all," said Ellen.

"Well, *I* do. How many pair of white stockings would you like to drive into the mud and let me wash out every week?"

"*You* wash?" said Ellen in surprise; "I didn't think of *your* doing it."

"Who did you think *was* going to do it? There's nothing in this house but goes through my hand, I can tell you, and so must you. I suppose you've lived all your life among people that thought a great deal of wetting their little finger; but I am not one of 'em, I guess you'll find."

Ellen was convinced of that already.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" said Miss Fortune, presently.

"I'm thinking of my nice white darning-cotton," said Ellen. "I might just as well not have had it."

"Is it wound or in the skein?"

"In the skein."

"Then just go right up and get it. I'll warrant I'll fix it so that you'll have a use for it."

Ellen obeyed, but musing rather uncomfortably what else there was of hers that Miss Fortune could lay hands on. She seemed in imagination to see all her white things turning brown. She resolved she would keep her trunk well locked up; but what if her keys should be called for?

She was dismissed to her room soon after the dyeing business was completed. It was rather a disagreeable surprise to find her bed still unmade; and she did not at all like the notion that the making of it in future must depend entirely upon herself; Ellen had no fancy for such handiwork. She went to sleep in somewhat the same dissatisfied mood with which the day had been begun; displeasure at her coarse heavy coverlid and cotton sheets again taking its place among weightier matters; and dreamed of tying them together into a rope by which to let herself down out of the window; but when she had got so far, Ellen's sleep became sound, and the end of the dream was never known.

CHAPTER XI.

RUNNING AWAY WITH THE BROOK.

CLOUDS and rain and cold winds kept Ellen within doors for several days. This did not better the state of matters between herself and her aunt. Shut up with her in the kitchen from morning till night, with the only variety of the old lady's company part of the time, Ellen thought neither of them improved upon acquaintance. She longed to go out again; but Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday passed, and the weather still kept her close prisoner. Monday brought a change, but though a cool drying wind blew all day, the ground was too wet to venture out.

On the evening of that day, as Miss Fortune was setting the table for tea, and Ellen sitting before the fire, feeling weary of everything, the kitchen door opened, and a girl somewhat larger and older than herself came in. She had a pitcher in her hand, and, marching straight up to the tea-table, she said—

"Will you let granny have a little milk to-night, Miss Fortune? I can't find the cow. I'll bring it back to-morrow."

"You ha'n't lost her, Nancy?"

"Have, though," said the other; "she's been away these two days."

"Why didn't you go somewhere nearer for milk?"

"Oh! I don't know—I guess your'n is the sweetest," said the girl, with a look Ellen did not understand.

Miss Fortune took the pitcher and went into the pantry. While she was gone, the two children improved the time in looking very hard at each other. Ellen's gaze was modest enough, though it showed a great deal of interest in the new object; but the broad, searching stare of the other seemed intended to take in all there was of Ellen from her head to her feet, and keep it, and find out what sort of a creature she was at once. Ellen almost shrank from the bold black eyes, but they never wavered till Miss Fortune's voice broke the spell.

"How's your grandmother, Nancy?"

"She's tolerable, ma'am, thank y'u."

"Now, if you don't bring it back to-morrow you won't get any more in a hurry," said Miss Fortune, as she handed the pitcher back to the girl.

"I'll mind it," said the latter, with a little nod of her head.

"Who is that Aunt Fortune?" said Ellen, when she was gone.

"She is a girl that dives up on the mountain yonder.

"But what's her name?"

"I had just as lief you wouldn't know her name. She ain't a good girl. Don't you never have anything to do with her."

Ellen was in no mind to give credit to all her aunt's opinions, and she set this down as in part at least coming from ill-humour.

The next morning was calm and fine, and Ellen spent nearly the whole of it out of doors. She did not venture near the ditch, but in every other direction she explored the ground, and examined what stood or grew upon it as thoroughly as she dared. Towards noon she was standing by the little gate at the back of the house, unwilling to go in, but not knowing what more to do, when Mr. Van Brunt came from the lane with a load of wood. Ellen watched the oxen toiling up the ascent, and thought it looked like very hard work; she was sorry for them.

"Isn't that a very heavy load?" she asked of their driver, as he was throwing it down under the apple tree.

"Heavy? Not a bit of it. It ain't nothing at all to 'em. They'd take twice as much any day with pleasure."

"I shouldn't think so," said Ellen; "they don't look as if there was much pleasure about it. What makes them lean over so against each other when they are coming up hill?"

"Oh, that's just a way they've got. They're so fond of each other, I suppose. Perhaps they've something particular to say, and want to put their heads together for the purpose."

"No," said Ellen, half laughing, "it can't be that; they wouldn't take the very hardest time for that; they would wait till they got to the top of the hill; but there they stand just as if they were asleep, only their eyes are open, poor things!"

"They're not very poor anyhow," said Mr. Van Brunt; "there ain't a finer yoke of oxen to be seen than them are, nor in better condition."

He went on throwing the wood out of the cart, and Ellen stood looking at him.

"What'll you give me if I'll make you up a scup one of these days?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"A scup!" said Ellen.

"Yes—a scup! how would you like it?"

"I don't know what it is," said Ellen.

"A scup!—maybe you don't know it by that name; some folks call it a swing."

"A swing! Oh yes," said Ellen, "now I know. I like it very much."

"Would you like to have one?"

"Yes, indeed I should, very much."

"Well, what'll you give me, if I'll fix you out?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, "I have nothing to give; I'll be very much obliged to you, indeed."

"Well, now, come, I'll make a bargain with you; I'll engage to fix up a scup for you if you'll give me a kiss."

Poor Ellen was struck dumb. The good-natured Dutchman had taken a fancy to the little pale-faced, sad-looking stranger, and really felt very kindly disposed towards her. She stood motionless, utterly astounded at this unheard-of proposal, and not a little indignant; but when, with a good-natured smile upon his round face, he came near to claim the kiss he no doubt thought himself sure of, Ellen shot from him like an arrow from a bow. She rushed to the house, and bursting open the door, stood with flushed face and sparkling eyes in the presence of her astonished aunt.

"What in the world is the matter?" exclaimed that lady.

"He wanted to kiss me!" said Ellen, scarce knowing whom she was talking to, and crimsoning more and more.

"Who wanted to kiss you?"

"That man out there."

"What man?"

"That man that drives the oxen."

"What, Mr. Van Brunt?" And Ellen never forgot the loud ha! ha! which burst from Miss Fortune's wide-opened mouth.

"Well, why didn't you let him kiss you?"

The laugh, the look, the tone, stung Ellen to the very quick. In a fury of passion she dashed away out of the kitchen, and up to her own room. And there, for a while, the storm of anger drove over her with such violence that conscience had hardly time to whisper. Sorrow came in again as passion faded, and gentler but very bitter weeping took the place of convulsive sobs of rage and mortification, and then the whispers of conscience began to be heard a little. "Oh, mamma! mamma!" cried poor Ellen in her heart, "how miserable I am without you! I never can like Aunt Fortune—I hope I shan't get to hate her!—and that isn't right. I am forgetting all that is good, and there's nobody to put me in mind. Oh! mamma, if I could lay my head in your lap for a minute!" Then came thoughts of her Bible and hymn-book, and the friend who had given it; sorrowful

thoughts they were; and at last, humbled and sad, poor Ellen sought that great Friend she knew she had displeased, and prayed earnestly to be made a good child; she felt and owned she was not one now.

It was long after mid-day when Ellen rose from her knees. Her passion was all gone; she felt more gentle and pleasant than she had done for days; but at the bottom of her heart, resentment was not all gone. She still thought she had cause to be angry, and she could not think of her aunt's look and tone without a thrill of painful feeling. In a very different mood, however, from that in which she had flown upstairs two or three hours before, she now came softly down, and went out by the front door, to avoid meeting her aunt. She had visited that morning a little brook which ran through the meadow on the other side of the road. It had great charms for her; and now crossing the lane and creeping under the fence, she made her way again to its banks. At a particular spot, where the brook made one of its sudden turns, Ellen sat down upon the grass, and watched the dark water,—whirling, brawling over the stones, hurrying past her, with ever the same soft, pleasant sound, and she was never tired of it. She did not hear footsteps drawing near, and it was not till someone was close beside her, and a voice spoke almost in her ears, that she raised her startled eyes and saw the little girl who had come the evening before for a pitcher of milk.

"What are you doing?" said the latter.

"I'm watching for fish," said Ellen.

"Watching for fish!" said the other, rather disdainfully.

"Yes," said Ellen, "there, in that little quiet place they come sometimes; I've seen two."

"You can look for fish another time. Come now and take a walk with me."

"Where?" said Ellen.

"Oh, you shall see. Come! I'll take you all about and show you where people live; you ha'n't been anywhere yet, have you?"

"No," said Ellen, "and I should like dearly to go, but——"

She hesitated. Her aunt's words came to mind, that this was not a good girl, and that she must have nothing to do with her; but she had not more than half believed them, and she could not possibly bring herself now to go in and ask Miss Fortune's leave to take this walk.

"I am sure," thought Ellen, "she would refuse me if there was no reason in the world." And then the delight of rambling through the beautiful country, and being for awhile in other company than that of

her Aunt Fortune and the old grandmother ! The temptation was too great to be withstood.

"Well, what are you thinking about?" said the girl; "what's the matter? won't you confide?"

"Yes," said Ellen, "I'm ready. Which way shall we go?"

With the assurance from the other that she would show her plenty of ways, they set off down the lane; Ellen with a secret fear of being seen and called back, till they had gone some distance, and the house was hid from view. Then her pleasure became great. The afternoon was fair and mild, the footing pleasant, and Ellen felt like a bird out of a cage. She was ready to be delighted with every trifle; her companion could not by any means understand or enter into her bursts of pleasure at many a little thing which she of the black eyes thought not worthy of notice. She tried to bring Ellen back to higher subjects of conversation.

"How long have you been here?" she asked.

"Oh, a good while," said Ellen; "I don't know exactly; it's a week, I believe."

"How do you like your Aunt Fortune?"

"How do I like her?" said Ellen, hesitating. "I think she's good-looking, and very smart."

"Yes, you needn't tell me she's smart,—everybody knows that; that ain't what I ask you. How do you *like* her?"

"How do I like her?" said Ellen, again; "how can I tell how I shall like her? I haven't lived with her but a week yet."

"You might just as well ha' spoke out," said the other, somewhat scornfully. "Do you think I don't know you half hate her already? When I first heard you'd come, I guessed you'd have a sweet time with her."

"Why?" said Ellen.

"Oh, don't ask me why," said the other impatiently, "when you know as well as I do. Every soul that speaks of you says 'poor child!' and 'I'm glad I ain't her.' You needn't try to come cunning over me. I shall be too much for you, I tell you."

"I don't know what you mean," said Ellen.

"Oh, no, I suppose you don't," said the other, in the same tone; "of course you don't; I suppose you don't know whether your tongue is your own or somebody's else. You think Miss Fortune is an angel, and so do I; to be sure she is!"

Not very well pleased with this kind of talk, Ellen walked on for a while in grave silence. Her companion meantime recollected herself; when she spoke again it was with an altered tone.

"How do you like Mr. Van Brunt?"

"I don't like him at all," said Ellen, reddening.

"Don't you?" said the other, surprised, "why, everybody likes him. What don't you like him for?"

"I don't like him," repeated Ellen.

"Ain't Miss Fortune queer to live in the way she does?"

"What way?" said Ellen.

"Why, without any help,—doing all her own work, and living all alone, when she's so rich as she is."

"Is she rich?" asked Ellen.

"Rich! I guess she is! she's one of the very best farms in the country, and money enough to have a dozen help, if she wanted 'em. Van Brunt takes care of the farm, you know."

"Does he?" said Ellen.

"Why, yes, of course he does! He does just what he pleases over the whole farm; hires what help he wants, manages everything; and then he has his share of all that comes off it. I tell you what—you'd better make friends with Van Brunt, for if anybody can help you when your aunt gets one of her ugly fits, it's him; she don't care to meddle with him much."

As they went along, she pointed out to Ellen two or three houses in the distance, and gave her not a little gossip about the people who lived in them; but all this Ellen scarcely heard, and cared nothing at all about. She had paused by the side of a large rock standing alone by the wayside, and was looking very closely at its surface.

"What is this curious brown stuff," said Ellen, "growing all over the rock?—like shrivelled and dried-up leaves?"

"Oh, never mind," said the other; "it always grows on the rocks everywhere; I don't know what it is, and what's more, I don't care. 'Tain't worth looking at. Come!"

Ellen followed her. But presently the path entered an open woodland, and now her delight broke forth beyond bounds.

"Oh, how pleasant this is! how lovely this is! Isn't it beautiful?" she exclaimed.

"Isn't *what* beautiful? I do think you are the queerest girl, Ellen."

"Why, everything," said Ellen, not minding the latter part of the sentence; "the ground is beautiful, and those tall trees, and that beautiful blue sky—only look at it."

"The ground is all covered with stones and rocks—is that what you call beautiful? and the trees are as homely as they can be, with their great brown stems and no leaves. Come! what *are* you staring

at?"

Ellen's eyes were fixed on a string of dark spots which were rapidly passing overhead.

"Hark!" said she; "do you hear that noise? what is that? what is that?"

"Isn't it only a flock of ducks," said the other, contemptuously; "come! do come!"

But Ellen was rooted to the ground, and her eyes followed the airy travellers till the last one had quitted the piece of blue sky which the surrounding woods left to be seen. And scarcely were these gone when a second flight came in view, following exactly in the track of the first.

"Where are they going?" said Ellen.

"I am sure I don't know where they are going; they never told me. I know where *I* am going; I should like to know whether you are going along with me."

Ellen was, however, in no hurry. The ducks had disappeared, but her eye had caught something else that charmed it.

"What is this?" said Ellen.

"Nothing but moss."

"Is that moss? How beautiful! how green and soft it is! I declare it's as soft as a carpet."

"As soft as a carpet!" repeated the other: "I should like to see a carpet as soft as that! *you* never did, I guess."

"Indeed I have, though," said Ellen, who was gently jumping up and down on the green moss to try its softness, with a face of great satisfaction.

"I don't believe it a bit," said the other; "all the carpets I ever saw were as hard as a board, and harder: as soft as that indeed!"

"Well," said Ellen, still jumping up and down, with bonnet off, and glowing cheek, and hair dancing about her face, "you may believe what you like; but I've seen a carpet as soft as this, and softer too; only one though."

"What was it made of?"

"What other carpets are made of, I suppose. Come, I'll go with you now. I do think this is the loveliest place I ever did see. Are there any flowers here in the spring?"

"I don't know—yes, lots of 'em."

"Pretty ones?" said Ellen.

"*You'd* think so, I suppose; I never look at 'em."

"Oh, how lovely that will be," said Ellen, clasping her hands; "how pleasant it must be to live in the country!"

"Pleasant, indeed!" said the other; "I think it's hateful. You'd think so too if you lived where I do. It makes me mad at granny every day because she won't go to Thirlwall. Wait till we get out of the wood, and I'll show you where I live. You can't see it from here."

Shocked a little at her companion's language, Ellen again walked on in sober silence. Gradually the ground became more broken, sinking rapidly from the side of the path, and rising again in a steep bank on the other side of a narrow dell; both sides were thickly wooded, but stripped of green, now, except where here and there a hemlock flung its graceful branches abroad, and stood in lonely beauty among its leafless companions. Now, the gurgling of waters was heard.

"Where is that?" said Ellen, stopping short.

"Way down, down, at the bottom there. It's the brook."

"What brook? Not the same that goes by Aunt Fortune's?"

"Yes, it's the very same. It's the crookedest thing you ever saw. It runs over there," said the speaker, pointing with her arm, "and then it takes a turn and goes that way, and then it comes round so, and then it shoots off in that way again and passes by your house; and after that the deer knows where it goes, for I don't."

"Can't we get down to it?" asked Ellen.

"To be sure we can, unless you're as afraid of steep banks as you are of fences."

Very steep indeed it was, and strewn with loose stones, but Ellen did not falter here, and though once or twice in imminent danger of exchanging her cautious stepping for one long fall to the bottom, she got there safely on her two feet. When there everything was forgotten in delight. The high, close sides of the dell left only a little strip of sky overhead; and at their feet ran the brook, much more noisy and lively here than where Ellen had before made its acquaintance; leaping from rock to rock, eddying round large stones, and boiling over the small ones. Ellen could scarcely contain herself at the magnificence of many of the waterfalls, the beauty of the little quiet pools where the water lay still behind some large stone, and the variety of graceful tiny cascades.

"I say, Ellen!" said Nancy, "suppos'n we follow the brook instead of climbing up yonder again; it will take us out to the open fields by-and-by."

"Oh, do let's!" said Ellen; "that will be lovely."

It proved a rough way; but Ellen still thought and called it lovely. By the side of the stream there was no footing at all, and the

girls picked their way over the stones, which strewed its bed. It was ticklish work getting along over these stones : now tottering on an unsteady one ; now slipping on a wet one ; and every now and then making huge leaps from rock to rock, at the imminent hazard of falling in. But they laughed at the danger ; sprang on in great glee, delighted with the exercise and the fun. There was many a hair-breadth escape ; many an *almost* sousing ; but that made it all the more lively. The brook formed a constant succession of little water-falls, its course being quite steep and very rocky ; and in some places there were pools quite deep enough to have given them a thorough wetting, to say no more, if they had missed their footing and tumbled in. But this did not happen. In due time, though with no little difficulty, they reached the spot where the brook came forth from the wood into the open day, and thence making a sharp turn to the right skirted along by the edge of the trees, as if unwilling to part company with them.

"I guess we'd better get back into the lane now," said Miss Nancy, "we're a pretty good long way from home."

CHAPTER XII.

SPLITTERS.

THEY left the wood and the brook behind them, and crossed a large stubble-field ; then got over a fence into another. They were in the midst of this when Nancy stopped Ellen, and bade her look up towards the west, where towered a high mountain, no longer hid from their view by the trees.

"I told you I'd show you where I live," said she. "Look up now,—clear to the top of the mountain, almost, and a little to the right : do you see that little mite of a house there ?"

"I see it," said Ellen, "do you live 'way up there ?"

"That's just what I do ; and that's just what I wish I didn't. But granny likes it ; she will live there. I'm blessed if I know what for, if it ain't to plague me. Do you think you'd like to live up on the top of a mountain like that ?"

"No, I don't think I should," said Ellen. "Isn't it very cold up there ?"

"Cold ! you don't know anything about it. The wind comes there, I tell you ! enough to cut you in two ; I have to take and hold on to the trees sometimes to keep from being blown away. And then granny

send me out every morning before it's light, no matter how deep the snow is, to look for the cows; and it's so bitter cold I expect nothing else but I'll be froze to death some time."

"Oh," said Ellen, with a look of horror, "how can she do so?"

"Oh, she don't care," said the other; "she sees my nose freeze off every winter, and it don't make no difference."

"Freeze your nose off!" said Ellen.

"To be sure," said the other nodding gravely, "every winter; it grows out again when the warm weather comes."

"And is that the reason why it is so little?" said Ellen, innocently, and with great curiosity.

"Little!" said the other, crimsoning in a fury, "what do you mean by that? it's as big as yours any day, I can tell you."

Ellen involuntarily put her hand to her face to see if Nancy spoke true. Somewhat reassured to find a very decided ridge where her companion's nose was wanting in the line of beauty, she answered in her turn—

"It's no such thing, Nancy! you oughtn't to say so; you know better."

"I *don't* know better! I *ought* to say so!" replied the other, furiously. "If I had your nose, I'd be glad to have it freeze off; I'd a sight rather have none. I'd pull it every day, if I was you, to make it grow."

"I shall believe what Aunt Fortune said of you was true," said Ellen. She had coloured very high, but she added no more, and walked on in dignified silence. Nancy stalked before her in silence that was meant to be dignified too, though it had not exactly that air. By degrees each cooled down, and Nancy was trying to find out what Miss Fortune had said of her, when on the edge of the next field they met the brook again. But how were they ever to cross it? The brook ran in a smooth current between them and a rising bank on the other side so high as to prevent their seeing what lay beyond. There were no stepping-stones now. The only thing that looked like a bridge was an old log that had fallen across the brook, or perhaps had at some time or other been put there on purpose; and that lay more than half in the water; what remained of its surface was green with moss and slippery with slime. Ellen was sadly afraid to trust herself on it; but what to do—Nancy soon settled the question as far as she was concerned. Pulling off her thick shoes, she ran fearlessly upon the rude bridge; her clinging bare feet carried her safely over, and Ellen soon saw her re-shoeing herself in triumph on the opposite side; but thus left behind and alone, her own difficulty increased.

"Pull off your shoes, and do as I did," said Nancy.

"I can't," said Ellen; "I'm afraid of wetting my feet."

"Afraid of wetting your feet!" said the other; "what a chickeninny you are! Well, if you try to come over with your shoes on you'll fall in, I tell you; and then you'll wet more than your feet. But come along somehow, for I won't stand here waiting much longer."

Thus urged, Ellen set out upon her perilous journey over the bridge. Slowly and fearfully she set step by step upon the slippery log. Already half of the danger was passed, when, reaching forward to grasp Nancy's outstretched hand, she missed it—*perhaps* that was Nancy's fault,—lost her balance, and went in head foremost. The water was deep enough to cover her completely as she lay, though not enough to prevent her getting up again. She was greatly frightened, but managed to struggle up to her feet, and then to wade out to the shore. The water was very cold; and, thoroughly sobered, poor Ellen felt chill enough in body and mind too.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she exclaimed in distress, "I am so cold!"

"Come along," said Nancy; "give me your hand; we'll run right over to Mrs. Van Brunt's—'tain't far. There," said she, as they got to the top of the bank, and came within sight of a house standing only a few fields off—"there it is! Run, Ellen, and we'll be there directly."

"Who is Mrs. Van Brunt?" Ellen contrived to say as Nancy hurried her along.

"Who is she?—why she's just Mrs. Van Brunt—your Mr. Van Brunt's mother, you know,—make haste, Ellen—we had rain enough the other day; I'm afraid it wouldn't be good for the grass if you stayed too long in one place; hurry: I'm afraid you'll catch cold."

Run they did; and a few minutes brought them to Mrs. Van Brunt's door. The little brick-walk leading to it from the courtyard gate was as neat as a pin; so was everything else the eye could rest on; and when Nancy went in poor Ellen stayed *her* foot at the door, unwilling to carry her wet shoes and dripping garments any farther. She could hear, however, what was going on.

"Hillo! Mrs. Van Brunt," shouted Nancy,—"where are you?—oh! Mrs. Van Brunt, are you out of water? 'cos if you are I've brought you a plenty; the person that has it don't want it; she's at the door, and wouldn't bring it in till she knew you wanted it. Oh, Mrs. Van Brunt, don't look so or you'll kill me with laughing. Come and see!"

The steps within drew near the door, and first Nancy showed herself, and then a little old woman, of very kind, pleasant countenance.

"What is all this?" said she in great surprise. "Bless me! poor little dear! what is this?"

"Nothing, in the world but a drowned rat, Mrs. Van Brunt, don't you see?" said Nancy.

"Go home, Nancy Vawse!" said the old lady; "you're a regular bad girl. I do believe this is some mischief o' yourn."

As she spoke, she drew Ellen in, and shut the door.

"Poor little dear," said the old lady, kindly, "what has happened to you? Come to the fire, love, you're trembling with the cold. Oh, dear! dear! you're soaking wet; this is all along of Nancy somehow, I know; how was it, love? Ain't you Miss Fortune's little girl? Never mind, don't talk, darling; there ain't one bit of colour in your face, not one bit."

Good Mrs. Van Brunt had drawn Ellen to the fire, and all this while she was pulling off as fast as possible her wet clothes. Then sending a girl who was in waiting for clean towels, she rubbed Ellen dry from head to foot, and wrapping her in a blanket, left her in a chair before the fire, while she went to seek something for her to put on. Ellen had managed to tell who she was, and how her mischance had come about, but little else, though the kind old lady had kept on pouring out words of sorrow and pity during the whole time. She came trotting back directly with one of her own short gowns, the only thing that she could lay hands on that was anything near Ellen's length. Enormously big it was for her, but Mrs. Van Brunt wrapped it round and round, and the blanket over it again, and then she bustled about till she had prepared a tumbler of hot drink which she said was to keep Ellen from catching cold. It was anything but agreeable, being made from some bitter herb, and sweetened with molasses; but Ellen swallowed it, as she would anything else at such kind hands, and the old lady carried her herself into a little room opening out of the kitchen, and laid her in a bed that had been warmed for her. Excessively tired and weak as she was, Ellen scarcely needed the help of the hot herb tea to fall into a very deep sleep; perhaps it might not have lasted so very long as it did, but for that. Afternoon changed for evening, evening grew quite dark, still Ellen did not stir; and after every little journey into the bedroom to see how she was doing, Mrs. Van Brunt came back saying how glad she was to see her sleeping so finely. Other eyes looked on for a minute—kind and gentle eyes; though Mrs. Van Brunt's were kind and gentle too; once a soft kiss touched her forehead, there was no danger of waking her.

It was perfectly dark in the little bedroom, and had been so a good

while, when Ellen was aroused by some noise, and then a rough voice she knew very well. Feeling faint and weak, and not more than half awake yet, she lay still and listened. She heard the outer door open and shut, and then the voice said—

"So, mother, you've got my stray sheep here, have you?"

"Ay, ay," said the voice of Mrs. Van Brunt. "Have you been looking for her? how did you know she was here?"

"Looking for her! ay, looking for her ever since sundown. She has been missing at the house since some time this forenoon. I believe her aunt got a bit scared about her; anyhow I did. She's a queer little chip as ever I see."

"She's a dear little soul, I know," said his mother; "you needn't say nothin' agin her, I ain't a going to believe it."

"No more am I—I'm the best friend she's got, if she only knowed it; but don't you think," said Mr. Van Brunt, laughing, "I asked her to give me a kiss this forenoon, and if I'd been an owl she couldn't ha' been more scared; she went off like a streak, and Miss Fortune said she was as mad as she could be, and that's the last of her."

"How did you find her out?"

"I met that mischievous Vawse girl, and I made her tell me; she had no mind to at first. It'll be the worse for Ellen if she takes to that wicked thing."

"She won't. Nancy has been taking her a walk, and worked it so as to get her into the brook, and then she brought her here, just as dripping wet as she could be. I gave her something hot and put her to bed, and she'll do, I reckon; but I tell you it gave me queer feelings to see the poor little thing just as white as ashes, and all of a tremble, and looking so sorrowful too. She's sleeping finely now; but it ain't right to see a child's face look so;—it ain't right," repeated Mrs. Van Brunt, thoughtfully. "You ha'n't had supper, have you?"

"No, mother, and I must take that young one back. Ain't she awake yet?"

"I'll see directly; but she ain't going home, nor you neither, 'Brahm, till you've got your supper; it would be a sin to let her. She shall have a taste of my splitters this very night; I've been makin' them o' purpose for her. So you may just take off your hat and sit down."

"You mean to let her know where to come when she wants good things, mother. Well, I won't say splitters ain't worth waiting for."

Ellen heard him sit down, and then she guessed from the words that passed that Mrs. Van Brunt and her little maid were busied in making the cakes; she lay quiet.

"You're a good friend, 'Brahm," began the old lady again, "nobody knows that better than me; but I hope that poor little thing has got another one to day that'll do more for her than you can."

"What, yourself, mother?"

"No, no; do you think I mean myself?—there, turn it quick, Sally!—Miss Alice has been here. She came in for a minute, and I took her—that'll burn, Sally!—I took her in to see the child while she was asleep, and told her all you told me about her. She didn't say much, but she looked at her very sweet, as she always does, and I guess—there—now I'll see after my little sleeper."

And presently Mrs. Van Brunt came to the bedside with a light, and her arm full of Ellen's dry clothes. Ellen felt as if she could have put her arms round her kind old friend and hugged her with all her heart; but it was not her way to show her feelings before strangers. She suffered Mrs. Van Brunt to dress her in silence, only saying with a sigh, "How kind you are to me, ma'am!" to which the old lady replied with a kiss, and telling her she mustn't say a word about that.

The kitchen was bright with firelight and candlelight; the tea-table looked beautiful with its piles of white splitters, besides plenty of other and more substantial things; and at the corner of the hearth sat Mr. Van Brunt.

"So," said he, smiling, as Ellen came in and took her stand at the opposite corner—"so I drove you away this morning? You ain't mad with me yet, I hope?"

Ellen crossed directly over to him, and putting her little hand in his great rough one, said, "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Van Brunt, for taking so much trouble to come and look after me."

She said it with a look of gratitude and trust that pleased him very much.

"Trouble indeed!" said he, good-humouredly, "I'll take twice as much any day for what you wouldn't give me this forenoon. But never fear, Miss Ellen, I ain't a-going to ask you that again."

He shook the little hand; and from that time, Ellen and her rough charioteer were firm friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOPE DEFERRED.

BEFORE the sun was up the next morning, Mrs. Van Brunt came into Ellen's room and aroused her.

"It's a real shame to wake' you up," she said, "when you were sleeping so finely; but 'Brahm wants to be off to his work, and won't stay for breakfast. Slept sound, did you?"

"Oh yes, indeed; as sound as a top," said Ellen, rubbing her eyes; "I am hardly awake yet."

"I declare it's too bad," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "but there's no help for it. You don't feel no headache, do you, nor pain in your bones?"

"No, ma'am, not a bit of it; I feel nicely."

"Ah! well," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "then your tumble into the brook didn't do you any mischief; I thought it wouldn't. Poor little soul!"

"I am very glad I did fall in," said Ellen, "for if I hadn't I shouldn't have come here, Mrs. Van Brunt."

The old lady instantly kissed her.

"Good-bye, ma'am," said she; "I may come and see you some time again, mayn't I?"

"Indeed you shall, my darling," said the old woman, "just as often as you like;—just as often as you can get away. I'll make 'Brahm bring you home sometimes. 'Brahm, you'll bring her, won't you?"

"There's two words to that bargain, mother, I can tell you; but if I don't, I'll know the reason on't."

And away they went. Ellen drew two or three sighs at first, but she could not help brightening up soon. It was early—not sunrise; the cool freshness of the air was enough to give one new life and spirit; the sky was fair and bright; and Mr. Van Brunt marched along at a quick pace. Enlivened by the exercise, Ellen speedily forgot everything disagreeable; and her little head was filled with pleasant things. She watched where the silver light in the east foretold the sun's coming; she watched the silver light change to gold; till a rich yellow tint was flung over the whole landscape; and then broke the first rays of light upon the tops of the western hills,—the sun was up. It was a new sight to Ellen.

"How beautiful! Oh, how beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"Just look," said Ellen, "how the light comes creeping down the side of the mountain,—now it has got to the wood,—Oh, do look at the tops of the trees! Oh! I wish mamma was here."

Mr. Van Brunt didn't know what to say to this. He rather wished so too, for her sake.

"There," said Ellen, "now the sunshine is on the fence, and the road, and everything. I wonder what is the reason that the sun shines first upon the top of the mountain, and then comes so slowly down the side; why don't it shine on the whole at once?"

Mr. Van Brunt shook his head in ignorance. "He guessed it always did so," he said.

"Yes," said Ellen, "I suppose it does, but that's the very thing,—I want to know the reason why. And I noticed just now, it shone in my face before it touched my hands. Isn't it queer?"

"Humph!—there's a great many queer things, if you come to that," said Mr. Van Brunt, philosophically.

But Ellen's head ran on from one thing to another, and her next question was not so wide of the subject as her companion might have thought.

"Mr. Van Brunt, are there any schools about here?"

"Schools?" said the person addressed, "yes—there's plenty of schools."

"Good ones?" said Ellen.

"Well, I don't exactly know about that; there's Captain Conklin's, that had ought to be a good 'un; he's a regular smart man they say."

"Whereabouts is that?" said Ellen.

"His school? It's a mile or so the other side of my house."

"And how far is it from your house to Aunt Fortune's?"

"A good deal better than two mile, but we'll be there before long. You ain't tired be you?"

"No," said Ellen. But this reminder gave a new turn to her thoughts, and her spirits were suddenly checked. Her former brisk and springing step changed to so slow and lagging a one, that Mr. Van Brunt more than once repeated his remark that he saw she was tired.

If it was that, Ellen grew tired very fast; she lagged more and more as they neared the house, and at last quite fell behind, and allowed Mr. Van Brunt to go in first.

Miss Fortune was busy about the breakfast, and as Mr. Van Brunt afterwards described it, "looking as if she could have bitten off a ten-penny nail." She gave them no notice at first, bustling to and fro with great energy, but all of a sudden she brought up directly in front of them and said—

"Why didn't you come home last night

The words were jerked out rather than spoken.

"I got wet in the brook," said Ellen, "and Mrs. Van Brunt was so kind as to keep me."

"Which way did you go out of the house yesterday?"

"Through the front door."

"The front door was locked."

"I unlocked it."

"What did you go out that way for?"

"I didn't want to come this way."

"Why not? Ellen hesitated. "Why not?" demanded Miss Fortune, still more emphatically than before.

"I didn't want to see you, ma'am," said Ellen, flushing.

"If ever you do so again!" said Miss Fortune in a kind of cold fury.

"I've a great mind to whip you for this, as ever I had to eat."

The flush faded on Ellen's cheek, and a shiver visibly passed over her—not from fear. She stood with downcast eyes and compressed lips, a certain instinct of childish dignity warning her to be silent. Mr. Van Brunt put himself in between.

"Come, come!" said he, "this is getting to be too much of a good thing. Beat your cream, ma'am, as much as you like, or if you want to try your hand on something else you'll have to take me first, I promise you."

"Now don't you meddle, Van Brunt," said the lady sharply, "with what ain't no business o' yourn."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Van Brunt,—"maybe it *is* my business; but meddle or no meddle, Miss Fortune, it is time for me to be in the field; and if you ha'n't no better breakfast for Miss Ellen and me than all this here, we'll just go right away hum again; but there's something in your kettle there that smells uncommonly nice, and I wish you'd just let us have it and no more words."

No more words did Miss Fortune waste on anyone that morning. She went on with her work and dished up the breakfast in silence, and with a face that Ellen did not quite understand; only she thought she had never in her life seen one so disagreeable.

There was a breach now between Ellen and her aunt that neither could make any effort to mend. Miss Fortune did not renew the disagreeable conversation that Mr. Van Brunt had broken off; she left Ellen entirely to herself, scarcely speaking to her, or seeming to know when she went out or she came in. And this lasted day after day. Wearily they passed. After one or two, Mr. Van Brunt seemed to stand just where he did before in Miss Fortune's good graces;—but not

Ellen. To her, when others were not by, her face wore constantly something of the same cold, hard, disagreeable expression it had put on after Mr. Van Brunt's interference,—a look that Ellen came to regard with absolute abhorrence. She kept away by herself as much as she could; but she did not know what to do with her time, and for want of something better often spent it in tears. She went to bed cheerless night after night, and arose spiritless morning after morning; and this lasted till Mr. Van Brunt more than once told his mother that "that poor little thing was going wandering about like a ghost, and growing thinner and paler every day; and he didn't know what she would come to if she went on so."

Ellen longed now for a letter with unspeakable longing, but none came; day after day brought new disappointment, each day more hard to bear. Of her only friend, Mr. Van Brunt, she saw little; he was much away in the fields during the fine weather, and when it rained Ellen herself was prisoner at home, whither he never came but at meal times.

"Where is the post-office, Mr. Van Brunt?" she asked one morning, as she stood watching the sharpening of an axe upon the grindstone. The axe was in that gentleman's hand, and its edge carefully laid to the whirling stone, which one of the farm boys was turning.

"Where is the post-office? Why, over to Thirlwall to be sure," replied Mr. Van Brunt, glancing up at her from his work—"Faster, Johnny."

"And how often do the letters come here?" said Ellen.

"Take care, Johnny!—some more water—mind your business, will you—just as often as I go to fetch 'em, Miss Ellen, and no oftener."

"And how often do you go, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Only when I've some other errand, Miss Ellen; my grain would never be in the barn if I was running to post-office every other thing—and for what ain't there too. I don't get a letter but two or three times a year, I s'pose, though I call, I guess, half-a-dozen times."

"Ah, but there's one there now, or soon will be, I know, for me," said Ellen. "When do you think you'll go again, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Now if I'd ha' knowed that I'd ha' gone to Thirlwall yesterday—I was within a mile of it. I don't see as I can go this week anyhow in the world; but I'll make some errand there the first day I can, Miss Ellen, that you may depend on. You shan't wait for your letter a bit longer than I can help."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Van Brunt—you're very kind. Then the letters never come except when you go after them?"

"No; yes, they do come once in a while by old Mr. Swaim, but he ha'n't been here this great while."

"And who's he?" said Ellen.

"Oh, he's a queer old chip that goes round the country on all sorts of errands; he comes along once in a while. That'll do, Johnny,—I believe this here tobl is as sharp as I have any occasion for."

"What's the use of pouring water upon the grindstone?" said Ellen; "why wouldn't it do as well dry?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," replied Mr. Van Brunt, who was slowly drawing his thumb over the edge of the axe; "your questions are a good deal too sharp for me, Miss Ellen; I only know it would spoil the axe, or the grindstone, or both most likely."

"It's very odd," said Ellen, thoughtfully; "I wish I knew everything. But, oh dear! I am not likely to know anything," said she, her countenance suddenly changing from its pleased inquisitive look to a cloud of disappointment and sorrow. Mr. Van Brunt noticed the change.

"Ain't your aunt going to send you to school, then?" said he.

"I don't know," said Ellen, sighing; "she never speaks about it, nor about anything else. But I declare I'll make her!" she exclaimed, changing again. "I'll go right in and ask her, and then she'll have to tell me."

Mr. Van Brunt, seemingly dubious about the success of this line of conduct, stroked his chin and his axe alternately two or three times in silence, and finally walked off. Ellen, without waiting for her courage to cool, went directly into the house.

Miss Fortune, however, was not in the kitchen; to follow her into her secret haunts, the dairy, cellar, or lower kitchen, was not to be thought of. Ellen waited awhile, but her aunt did not come, and the excitement of the moment cooled down. She was not quite so ready to enter upon the business as she had felt at first; she had even some qualms about it.

"But I'll do it," said Ellen to herself; "it will be hard, but I'll do it!"

CHAPTER XIV.

WORK "NOT" DEFERRED.

THE next morning after breakfast Ellen found the chance she rather dreaded than wished for. Mr. Van Brunt had gone out; the old lady had not left her room, and Miss Fortune was quietly seated by the fire.

busied with some mysteries of cooking. Like a true coward, Ellen could not make up her mind to bolt at once into the thick of the matter, but thought to come to it gradually.

"What is that, Aunt Fortune?" said she, after she had watched her with a beating heart for about five minutes.

"Hop-water."

"What is it for?"

"I'm scalding this meal with it to make turnpikes."

"Turnpikes!" said Ellen; "I thought turnpikes were high, smooth roads with toll-gates every now and then—that's what mamma told me they were."

"That's all the kind of turnpikes your mamma knew anything about, I reckon," said Miss Fortune, in a tone that conveyed the notion that Mrs. Montgomery's education had been very incomplete.

"What are these, then, Aunt Fortune?"

"Cakes, child, cakes! turnpike cakes—what I raise the bread with."

"What, those little brown cakes I have seen you melt in water and mix in the flour when you make bread?"

"Mercy on us! yes! you've seen hundreds of 'em since you've been here if you never saw one before."

"I never did," said Ellen. "But what are they called turnpikes for?"

"The land knows! I don't. For mercy's sake stop asking me questions, Ellen; you'll drive me crazy."

"But there's one more question I want to ask very much," said Ellen, with her heart beating.

"Well, ask it then quick, and have done, and take yourself off. I have other fish to fry than to answer all your questions."

"Aunt Fortune, I wanted to ask you if I may go to school?"

"Yes."

Ellen's heart sprang with a feeling of joy, a little qualified by the peculiar dry tone in which the word was uttered.

"When may I go?"

"As soon as you like."

"O thank you, ma'am. To which school shall I go, Aunt Fortune?"

"To whichever you like."

"But I don't know anything about them," said Ellen; "how can I tell which is best?"

Miss Fortune was silent.

"What schools are there near here?" said Ellen.

"There's Captain Conklin's down at the Cross, and Miss Emerson's at Thirlwall."

Ellen hesitated. The name was against her, but nevertheless she concluded on the whole that the lady's school would be the pleasantest.

"Is Miss Emerson any relation of yours?" she asked.

"No."

"I think I should like to go to her school the best. I will go there if you will let me—may I?"

"Yes."

"And I will begin next Monday—may I?"

"Yes."

Ellen wished exceedingly that her aunt would speak in some other tone of voice; it was a continual damper to her rising hopes.

"I'll get my books ready," said she, "and look 'em over a little too, I guess. But what will be the best way for me to go, Aunt Fortune?"

"I don't know."

"I couldn't walk so far, could I?"

"You know best."

"I couldn't, I'm sure," said Ellen; "it's four miles to Thirlwall, Mr. Van Brunt said; that would be too much for me to walk twice a day; and I should be afraid besides."

A dead silence.

"But, Aunt Fortune, do please tell me what I am to do. How can I know unless you tell me? What way is there that I can go to school?"

"It is unfortunate that I don't keep a carriage," said Miss Fortune; "but Mr. Van Brunt can go for you morning and evening in the ox-cart, if that will answer."

"The ox-cart! But dear me! it would take him all day, Aunt Fortune. It takes hours and hours to go and come with the oxen; Mr. Van Brunt wouldn't have time to do anything but carry me to school and bring me home."

"Of course; but that's of no consequence," said Miss Fortune, in the same dry tone.

"Then I can't go—there's no help for it," said Ellen despondingly. "Why didn't you say so before? When you said yes I thought you meant yes."

She covered her face. Miss Fortune rose with a half smile and

carried her jar of scalded meal into the pantry. She then came back and commenced the operation of washing-up the breakfast things.

"Ah, if I only had a little pony," said Ellen, "that would carry me there and back, and go trotting about with me everywhere,—how nice that would be!"

"Yes, that would be very nice! And who do you think would go trotting about after the pony? I suppose you would leave that to Mr. Van Brant; and I should have to go trotting about after you, to pick you up in case you broke your neck in some ditch or gully; it would be a very nice affair altogether, I think."

Ellen was silent. Her hopes had fallen to the ground, and her disappointment was unsoothed by one word of kindness or sympathy. With all her old grievances fresh in her mind, she sat thinking her aunt was the very most disagreeable person she had ever had the misfortune to meet with.

"What are you thinking of?" said she, rather sharply.

"I am thinking," said Ellen, "I am very sorry I cannot go to school."

"Why, what do you want to learn so much? you know how to read and write and cipher, don't you?"

"Read and write and cypher?" said Ellen, "to be sure I do; but that's nothing; that's only the beginning."

"Well, what do you want to learn besides?"

"Oh, a great many things," said Ellen; "French, and Italian, and Latin, and music, and arithmetic, and chemistry, and all about animals and plants and insects. But I'm doing nothing," said Ellen sadly; "learning nothing—I am not studying and improving myself as I meant to; mamma will be disappointed when she comes back, and I meant to please her so much!" The tears were fast coming; she put her hand upon her eyes to force them back.

"If you are so tired of being idle," said Miss Fortune, "I'll warrant I'll give you something to do; and something to learn too, that you want enough more than all those crinkumcrankums; I wonder what good they'd ever do you! That's the way your mother was brought up I suppose. If she had been trained to use her hands and do something useful instead of thinking herself above it, maybe she wouldn't have had to go to sea for her health just now; it doesn't do for women to be bookworms."

"Mamma isn't a bookworm!" said Ellen indignantly; "I don't know what you mean: and she never thinks herself above being useful;

it's very strange you should say so when you don't know anything about her."

"I know she ha'n't brought you up to know manners, anyhow," said Miss Fortune. "Look here, I'll give you something to do,—just you put those plates and dishes together ready for washing, while I am downstairs."

Ellen obeyed, unwillingly enough. She had neither knowledge of the business nor any liking for it; so it is no wonder Miss Fortune at her return was not well pleased.

"But I never did such a thing before," said Ellen.

"There it is now!" said Miss Fortune. "I wonder where your eyes have been every single time that I have done it since you have been here. I should think your own sense might have told you! But you're too busy learning of Mr. Van Brunt to know what's going on in the house. Is that what you call made ready for washing? Now, just have the goodness to scrape every plate clean off and put them nicely in a pile here; and turn out the slops out of the tea-cups and saucers and set them by themselves. Well! what makes you handle them so? are you afraid they'll burn you?"

"I don't like to take hold of things people have drunk out of," said Ellen, who was indeed touching the cups and saucers very delicately with the tips of her fingers.

"Look here," said Miss Fortune, "don't you let me hear no more of that, or I vow I'll give you something to do you won't like. Now, put the spoons here, and the knives and forks together here; and carry the salt-cellar and the pepper-box and the butter and the sugar into the buttery."

"I don't know where to put them," said Ellen.

"Come along, then, and I'll show you; it's time you did. I reckon you'll feel better when you've something to do, and you shall have plenty. There—put them in that cupboard, and set the butter up here, and put the bread in this box, do you see? Now, don't let me have to show you twice over."

This was Ellen's first introduction to the buttery; she had never dared to go in there before. It was a long, light closet or pantry, lined on the left side and at the further end with wide shelves up to the ceiling. On these shelves stood many capacious pans and basins of tin and earthenware, filled with milk, and most of them coated with superb yellow cream. Midway was the window, before which Miss Fortune was accustomed to skim her milk, and at the side of it was the mouth of a wooden pipe, or covered trough, which conveyed the

refuse milk down to an enormous hogshead standing at the lower kitchen door, whence it was drawn as wanted for the use of the pigs. Beyond the window in the buttery, and on the higher shelves, were rows of yellow cheeses; forty or fifty were there at least. On the right-hand of the door was the cupboard, and a short range of shelves, which held in ordinary all sorts of anatter for the tables, both dishes and catables.

Ellen did not find out all this at once, but in the course of a day or two, during which her visits to the buttery were many. Miss Fortune kept her word, and found her plenty to do; Ellen's life soon became a pretty busy one. She did not like this at all: it was a kind of work she had no love for; yet no doubt it was a good exchange for the miserable moping life she had lately led. One concern, however, lay upon poor Ellen's mind with pressing weight,—her neglected studies and wasted time; for no better than wasted she counted it.

"What shall I do?" she said to herself, after several of these busy days had passed; "I am doing nothing—I am learning nothing—I shall forget all I have learnt, directly." At this rate I shall not know any more than all these people around me; and what *will* mamma say?—Well, if I can't go to school I know what I will do," she said, taking a sudden resolve, "I'll study by myself! I'll see what I can do; it will be better than nothing, anyway. I'll begin this very day!"

With new life Ellen sprang upstairs to her room, and forthwith began pulling all the things out of her trunk to get at her books. They were at the very bottom; and by the time she had reached them half the floor was strewn with the various articles of her wardrobe; without minding them in her first eagerness, Ellen pounced at the books.

With all her heart she would have begun her studying at once, but there were all her things on the floor, silently saying, "Put us up first."

"I declare," said she to herself, "it's too bad to have nothing in the shape of a bureau to keep one's clothes in. I wonder if I am to live in a trunk, as mamma says, all the time I am here, and have to go down to the bottom of it every time I want a pocket-handkerchief or pair of stockings? How I do despise those grey stockings!—But what can I do? it's too bad to squeeze my nice things up so. I wonder what is behind those doors? I'll find out, I know, before long."

On the north side of Ellen's room were three doors. She had never opened them, but now took it into her head to see what was there, thinking she might possibly find what would help her out of her

difficulty. She had some little fear of meddling with anything in her aunt's domain; so she fastened her own door, to guard against interruption while she was busied in making discoveries.

At the foot of her bed, in the corner, was one large door fastened by a button, as indeed they were all. This opened, she found a flight of stairs, leading as she supposed to the garret, but Ellen did not care to go up and see. They were lighted by half of a large window, across the middle of which the stairs went up. She quickly shut that door, and opened the next, a little one. Here she found a tiny closet under the stairs, lighted by the other half of the window. There was nothing in it but a broad low shelf or step under the stairs, where Ellen presently decided she could stow away her books very nicely. "It only wants a little brushing out," said Ellen, "and it will do very well." The other door, in the other corner, admitted her to a large light closet, perfectly empty. "Now, if there were only some hooks or pegs here," thought Ellen, "to hang up dresses—but why shouldn't I drive some nails?" "I will! I will! Oh, that'll be fine!"

Unfastening her door in a hurry, she ran downstairs, and her heart beating, between pleasure and the excitement of daring so far without her aunt's knowledge, she ran out and crossed the chip-yard to the barn, where she found Mr. Van Brunt threshing wheat.

"Well," said he, "have you come out here to see what's going on?"

"No," said Ellen, "I've been looking, —but, Mr. Van Brunt, could you be so good as to let me have a hammer and half-a-dozen nails?"

"A hammer and half-a-dozen nails; come this way," said he.

They went out of the barn-yard and across the chip-yard to an out-house below the garden and not far from the spout, called the poultry-house; though it was quite as much the property of the hogs, who had a regular sleeping apartment there, where corn was always fed out to the fattening ones. Opening a kind of granary store-room, where the corn for this purpose was stored, Mr. Van Brunt took down from a shelf a large hammer and a box of nails, and asked Ellen what size she wanted.

"Pretty large."

"So?"

"No, a good deal bigger yet I should like."

"A good deal bigger yet, —who wants 'em?"

"I do," said Ellen, smiling.

"You do! do you think your little arms can manage that big hammer?"

"I don't know; I guess so. I'll try."

"Where do you want 'em driv'?"

"Up in a closet in my room," said Ellen, speaking as softly as if she had feared her aunt was at the corner; "I want 'em to hang up dresses and things."

Mr. Van Brunt half smiled, and put up the hammer and nails on the shelf again.

"Now, I'll tell you what we'll do," said he; "you can't manage them big things; I'll put 'em up for you to-night when I come in to supper."

"But I'm afraid she won't let you," said Ellen, doubtfully.

"Never you mind about that," said he, "I'll fix it. Maybe we won't ask her."

"O, thank you!" said Ellen, joyfully, her face recovering its full sunshine in answer to his smile; and clapping her hands she ran back to the house, while more slowly Mr. Van Brunt returned to the threshers. Ellen seized dust-pan and brush and ran up to her room; and setting about the business with right good will, she soon had her closets in beautiful order. The books, writing-desk, and work-box were then bestowed very carefully in the one; in the other her coats and dresses neatly folded up in a pile on the floor, waiting till the nails should be driven. Then the remainder of her things were gathered up from the floor, and neatly arranged in the trunk again. Having done all this, Ellen's satisfaction was unbounded. By this time dinner was ready. As soon after dinner as she could escape from Miss Fortune's calls upon her, Ellen stole up to her room and her books, and began work in earnest. The whole afternoon was spent over sums, and verbs, and maps, and pages of history. A little before tea, as Ellen was setting the table, Mr. Van Brunt came into the kitchen with a bag on his back.

"What have you got there, Mr. Van Brunt?" said Miss Fortune.

"A bag of seed corn."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Put it up in the garret for safe keeping."

"Set it down in the corner and I'll take it up to-morrow."

"Thank you, m'am,—rather go myself, if it's all the same to you. You needn't be scared, I've left my shoes at the door. Miss Ellen, I believe I've got to go through your room."

Ellen was glad to run before to hide her laughter. When they reached her room Mr. Van Brunt produced a hammer out of the bag, and taking a handful of nails from his pocket, put up a fine row of

them along her closet wall ; then while she hung up her dresses he went on to the garret, and Ellen heard him hammering there too. Presently he came down and they returned to the kitchen.

"What's all that knocking?" said Miss Fortune.

"I've been driving some nails," said Mr. Van Brunt, coolly.

"Up in the garret?"

"Yes, and in Miss Ellen's closet; she said she wanted some."

"You should ha' spoke to *me* about it," said Miss Fortune to Ellen. There was displeasure enough in her face; but she said no more, and the matter blew over much better than Ellen had feared.

Ellen steadily pursued her plan of studying, in spite of some discouragements.

A letter written about ten days after gave her mother an account of her endeavours and of her success. It was a despairing account. Ellen complained that she wanted help to understand, and lacked time to study; that her aunt kept her busy, and, she believed, took pleasure in breaking her off from her books; and she bitterly said her mother must expect to find an ignorant little daughter when she came home. It ended with, "Oh, if I could just see you, and kiss you, and put my arms round you, mamma, I'd be willing to die!"

This letter was despatched the next morning by Mr. Van Brunt; and Ellen waited and watched with great anxiety for his return from Thirlwall in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XV.

MOTHER EARTH RATHER THAN AUNT FORTUNE.

THE afternoon was already half spent when Mr. Van Brunt's ox-cart was seen returning. Ellen was standing by the little gate that opened on the chip-yard; and with her heart beating anxiously she watched the slow-coming oxen;—how slowly they came! At last they turned out of the lane and drew the cart up the ascent; and stopping beneath the apple-tree Mr. Van Brunt leisurely got down, and flinging back his whip came to the gate. But the little face that met him there, quivering with hope and fear, made his own quite sober. "I'm really very sorry, Miss Ellen——" he began.

That was enough. Ellen waited to hear no more, but turned away, the cold chill of disappointment coming over her heart. She had borne the former delays pretty well, but this was one too many, and she felt sick. She went round to the front stoop, where scarcely ever

anybody came, and sitting down on the steps wept sadly and despairingly.

It might have been half an hour or so after, that the kitchen door slowly opened and Ellen came in. Wishing her aunt should not see her swollen eyes, she was going quietly through to her own room when Miss Fortune called her. Ellen stopped. Miss Fortune was sitting before the fire with an open letter lying in her lap and another in her hand. The latter she held out to Ellen, saying, "Here, child, come and take this."

"What is it?" said Ellen, slowly coming towards her.

"Don't you see what it is?" said Miss Fortune, still holding it out.

"But who is it from?" said Ellen.

"Your mother."

"A letter from mamma, and not to me?" said Ellen with changing colour. She took it quick from her aunt's hand. But her colour changed more as her eyes fell upon the first words, "My dear Ellen," and turning the paper she saw upon the back, "Miss Ellen Montgomery." Her next look was to her aunt's face, with her eyes fired and her cheek paled with anger, and when she spoke her voice was not the same.

"This is *my* letter," she said, trembling; "who opened it?"

Miss Fortune's conscience must have troubled her a little, for her eyes wavered uneasily. Only for a second though.

"Who opened it?" she answered; "I opened it. I should like to know who has a better right. And I shall open every one that comes, to serve you for looking so; that you may depend upon."

The look, and the words, and the injury together, fairly put Ellen beside herself. She dashed the letter to the ground, and livid and trembling with various feelings—rage was not the only one,—she ran from her aunt's presence. She did not shed any tears now; she could not; they were absolutely burnt up by passion. She walked her room with trembling steps, clasping and wringing her hands now and then, wildly thinking what *could* she do to get out of this dreadful state of things, and unable to see anything but misery before her. She walked, for she could not sit down, but presently she felt that she could not breathe the air of the house; and taking her bonnet she went down, passed through the kitchen and went out. Miss Fortune asked where she was going, and bade her stay within doors, but Ellen paid no attention to her.

She stood still a moment outside the little gate. She might have stood long to look. The mellow light of an Indian-summer afternoon

lay upon the meadow and the old barn and chip-yard; there was beauty in them all under its smile. Not a breath was stirring. The rays of the sun struggled through the blue haze, which hung upon the hills and softened every distant object; and the silence of nature all round was absolute. It was a relief to be out of the house and in the sweet open air. Ellen breathed more freely, and pausing a moment there, and clasping her hands together once more in sorrow, she went down the road and out at the gate, and took the way towards Thirlwall. Little regarding the loveliness which that day was upon every slope and roadside, Ellen presently quitted the Thirlwall road, and half unconsciously turned into a path on the left. She did not care about where she was going, she only found it pleasant to walk on and get further from home. The road or lane led towards a mountain somewhat to the north-west of Miss Fortune's; the same which Mr. Van Brunt had once named to Ellen as "the Nose." After three quarters of an hour the road began gently to ascend the mountain, rising towards the north. About one-third of the way from the bottom Ellen came to a little footpath on the left which allured her by its promise of prettiness, and she forsook the lane for it. The promise was abundantly fulfilled; it was a most lovely wild wood-way path; but withal not a little steep and rocky. Ellen began to grow weary. The mountain rose steep behind her, and sank very steep immediately before her, leaving a very superb view of the open country from the north-east to the south-east. Carpeted with moss, and furnished with fallen stones and pieces of rock, this was a fine resting-place for the wayfarer, or loitering-place for the lover of nature. Ellen seated herself on one of the stones, and looked sadly and wearily towards the east, at first very careless of the exceeding beauty of what she beheld there.

Poor Ellen did not heed the picturesque effect of all this, yet the sweet influences of nature reached her, and softened while they increased her sorrow. She felt her own heart sadly out of tune with the peace and loveliness of all she saw. Her eye sought those distant hills,—how very far off they were! and yet all that wide tract of country was but a little piece of what lay between her and her mother. "I cannot reach her!—she cannot reach me!" thought poor Ellen. Her eyes had been filling and dropping tears for some time, but now came the rush of the pent-up storm, and the floods of grief were kept back no longer.

When once fairly excited, Ellen's passions were always extreme. During the former peaceful and happy part of her life the occasions of

such excitement had been very rare. Of late unhappily they had occurred much oftener. Many were the bitter fits of tears she had known within a few weeks. But now it seemed as if all the scattered causes of sorrow that had wrought those tears were gathered together and pressing upon her at once; and that the burden would crush her to the earth. To the earth it brought her literally. She slid from her seat at first, and embracing the stone on which she had sat, she leaned her head there; but presently in her agony quitting her hold of that, she cast herself down upon the moss, lying at full length upon the cold ground, which seemed to her childish fancy the best friend she had left. But Ellen was wrought up to the last pitch of grief and passion. Tears brought no relief. Convulsive weeping only exhausted her. In the extremity of her distress and despair, and in that lonely place, out of hearing of everyone, she sobbed aloud, and even screamed, for almost the first time in her life; and these fits of violence were succeeded by exhaustion, during which she ceased to shed tears and lay quite still, drawing only long sobbing sighs now and then.

How long Ellen had lain there, or how long this would have gone on before her strength had been quite worn out, no one can tell. In one of these fits of forced quiet, when she lay as still as the rocks around her, she heard a voice close by say, "What is the matter, my child?"

The silver sweetness of the tone came singularly upon the tempest in Ellen's mind. She got up hastily, and brushing away the tears from her dimmed eyes, she saw a young lady standing there, and a face whose sweetness well matched the voice looking upon her with grave concern. She stood motionless and silent.

"What is the matter, my dear?"

The tone found Ellen's heart and brought the water to her eyes again, though with a difference. She covered her face with her hands. But gentle hands were placed upon hers and drew them away; and the lady sitting down on Ellen's stone, took her in her arms; and Ellen hid her face in the bosom of a better friend than the cold earth had been like to prove to her. But the change overcame her; and the soft whisper, "Don't cry any more," made it impossible to stop crying. Nothing further was said for some time; the lady waited till Ellen grew calmer. When she saw her able to answer, she said gently—

"What does all this mean, my child? What troubles you? Tell me, and I think we can find a way to mend matters."

Ellen answered the tone of voice with a faint smile, but the words with another gush of tears.

"You are Ellen Montgomery, aren't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I thought so. This isn't the first time I have seen you; I have seen you once before."

Ellen looked up surprised.

"Have you, ma'am? I am sure I have never seen you."

"No, I know that. I saw you when you didn't see me. Where do you think?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," said Ellen; "I can't guess; I haven't seen you at Aunt Fortune's, and I haven't been anywhere else."

"You have forgotten," said the lady. "Did you never hear of a little girl who went to take a walk once upon a time, and had an unlucky fall into a brook? and then went to a kind old lady's house where she was dried and put to bed and went to sleep?"

"Oh, yes," said Ellen. "Did you see me there, ma'am, and when I was asleep?"

"I saw you there when you were asleep; and Mrs. Van Brunt told me who you were and where you lived; and when I came here a little while ago I knew you again very soon. And I knew what the matter was too, pretty well; but nevertheless tell me all about it, Ellen; perhaps I can help you."

Ellen shook her head dejectedly. "Nobody in this world can help me," she said.

"Then there's One in heaven that can," said the lady steadily. "Nothing is too bad for Him to mend. Have you asked *His* help, Ellen?"

Ellen began to weep again. "Oh, if I could I would tell you all about it, ma'am," she said; "but there are so many things, I don't know where to begin; I don't know when I should ever get through."

"So many things that trouble you, Ellen?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I am sorry for that, indeed. But never mind, dear, tell me what they are. Begin with the worst, and if I haven't time to hear them all now I'll find time another day. Begin with the worst."

But she waited in vain for an answer, and became distressed herself at Ellen's distress, which was extreme.

"Don't cry so, my child—don't cry so," she said, pressing her in her arms. "What is the matter? hardly anything in this world is so bad it can't be mended. I think I know what troubles you so—it is that your dear mother is away from you, isn't it?"

"Oh, no, ma'am!" Ellen could scarcely articulate. But struggling

with herself for a minute or two, she then spoke again and more clearly.

"The worst is—oh! the worst is—that I meant—I meant—to be a good child, and I have been worse than ever I was in my life before."

Her tears gushed forth.

"But how, Ellen?" said her surprised friend, after a pause. "I don't quite understand you. When did you mean to be a good child?" "Didn't you always mean to? and what have you been doing?"

Ellen made a great effort and ceased crying; straightened herself; dashed away her tears as if determined to shed no more; and presently spoke calmly, though a choking sob every now and then threatened to interrupt her.

"I will tell you, ma'am. The first day I left mamma—when I was on board the steamboat and feeling as bad as I could feel, a kind, kind gentleman, I don't know who he was, came to me and spoke to me, and took care of me the whole day. Oh, if I could see him again! He talked to me a great deal; he wanted me to be a Christian; he wanted me to make up my mind to begin that day to be one; and, ma'am, I did. I did resolve with my whole heart, and I thought I should be different from that time from what I had ever been before. But I think I have never been so bad in my life as I have been since then. Instead of feeling right I have felt wrong all the time, almost—and I can't help it. I have been passionate and cross, and bad feelings keep coming, and I know it's wrong, and it makes me miserable. And yet, oh! ma'am, I haven't changed my mind a bit,—I think just the same as I did that day; I want to be a Christian more than anything else in the world, but I am not; and what shall I do!"

Her face sank into her hands again.

"And this is your great trouble?" said her friend.

"Yes."

"Do you remember who said, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'?"

Ellen looked up enquiringly.

"You are so grieved to find yourself so unlike what you would be. You wish to be a child of the dear Saviour and to have your heart filled with His love, and do what will please Him. Do you? Have you gone to Him day by day, and night by night, and told Him so?—have you begged Him to give you strength to get the better of your wrong feelings, and asked Him to change you and make you His child?"

"At first I did, ma'am," said Ellen, in a low voice.

"Not lately?"

"No, ma'am," in a low tone still, and looking down.

- "Then you have neglected your Bible and prayer for some time past?"

Ellen hardly uttered, "Yes."

"Why, my child?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Ellen, weeping, "that is one of the things that made me think myself so very wicked. I couldn't like to read my Bible or pray either, though I always used to before. My Bible lay down quite at the bottom of my trunk, and I even didn't like to raise my things enough to see the cover of it. I was so full of bad feelings I didn't feel fit to pray or read either."

"Ah! that is the way with the wisest of us," said her companion, "how apt we are to shrink most from our Physician just when we are in most need of Him. But, Ellen, dear, that isn't right. No hand but His can touch that sickness you are complaining of. Seek it, love, seek it. He will hear and help you, no doubt of it, in every trouble you carry simply and humbly to His feet; He has *promised*, you know."

Ellen was weeping very much, but less bitterly than before; the clouds were breaking and light beginning to shine through.

"Shall we pray together now?" said her companion after a few minutes' pause.

"Oh, if you please, ma'am, do!" Ellen answered through her tears.

And they knelt together there on the moss beside the stone, where Ellen's head rested and her friend's folded hands were laid. It might have been two children speaking to their father, for the simplicity of that prayer; difference of age seemed to be forgotten, and what suited one suited the other. It was not without difficulty that the speaker carried it calmly through, for Ellen's sobs went nigh to check her more than once. When they rose Ellen silently sought her friend's arms again, and laying her face on her shoulder and putting both arms round her neck, she wept still, but what different tears! It was like the gentle rain falling through sunshine, after the dark cloud and the thunder and the hurricane have passed by. And they kissed each other before either of them spoke.

"You will not forget your Bible and prayer again, Ellen?"

"Oh no, ma'am."

"Then I am sure you will find your causes of trouble grow less. I will not hear the rest of them now. In a day or two I hope you will be

able to give me a very different account from what you would have done an hour ago ; but besides that it is getting late, and it will not do for us to stay too long up here ; you have a good way to go to reach home. Will you come and see me to-morrow afternoon ?”

“ Oh, yes, ma'am, indeed I will ! if I can ;—and if you will tell me where.”

“ Instead of turning up this little rocky path you must keep straight on in the road, that's all ; and it's the first house you come to. It isn't very far from here. Where were you going on the mountain ?”

“ Nowhere, ma'am.”

“ Have you been any higher than this ?”

“ No, ma'am.”

“ Then before we go away I want to show you something. I'll take you over the Bridge of the Nose ; it isn't but a step or two more ; a little rough, to be sure, but you mustn't mind that.”

“ What is the ‘ Bridge of the Nose,’ ma'am ?” said Ellen, as they left her resting-place, and began to toil up the path which grew more steep and rocky than ever.

“ You know this mountain is called the Nose. Just here it runs out to a very thin sharp edge. We shall come to a place presently where you turn a very sharp corner to get from one side of the hill to the other ; and my brother named it jokingly the Bridge of the Nose.”

“ Why do they give the mountain such a queer name ?” said Ellen.

“ I don't know I'm sure. The people say that from one point of view this side of it looks very like a man's nose ; but I never could find it out, and have some doubt about the fact. But now here we are ! Just come round this great rock,—mind how you step, Ellen,—now look there !”

The rock they had just turned was at their backs, and they looked towards the west. Both exclaimed at the beauty before them. The view was not so extended as the one they had left. On the north and south the broken wavy outline of mountains closed in the horizon ; but far to the west stretched an opening between the hills through which the setting sun sent his long beams, even to their feet. In the distance all was a golden haze ; nearer, on the right and left, the hills were lit up singularly, and there was a most beautiful mingling of deep ~~hazy~~ shadow and bright glowing mountain sides and ridges. A glory was upon the valley. Far down below at their feet lay a large lake gleaming in the sunlight ; and at the upper end of it a village of some size showed like a cluster of white dots.

“ How beautiful !” said the lady again. “ Ellen, dear, He whose

hand raised up those mountains and has painted them so gloriously is the very same One who has said, to you and to me, 'Ask and it shall be given you.'"

Ellen looked up; their eyes met; her answer was in that grateful glance.

The lady sat down and drew Ellen close to her. "Do you see that little white village yonder, down at the far end of the lake? That is the village of Carra-carra; and that is Carra-carra lake; that is where I go to church; you cannot see the little church from here. My father preaches there every Sunday morning."

"You must have a long way to go," said Ellen.

"Yes—a pretty long way, but it's very pleasant, though. I mount my little grey pony, and he carries me there in quick time when I will let him. I never wish the way shorter. I go in all sorts of weathers too, Ellen. Where do you go, Ellen? to Thirlwall?"

"To church, ma'am? I don't go anywhere."

"Doesn't you aunt go to church?"

"She hasn't since I have been here."

"What do you do with yourself on Sunday?"

"Nothing, ma'am; I don't know what to do with myself all the day long. I get tired of being in the house, and I go out of doors, and then I get tired of being out of doors, and come in again."

"My poor child!" said the lady, "you have been hardly bested, I think. What if you were to come and spend next Sunday with me?"

"Oh, I'll come gladly if you will let me," said Ellen, "and if Aunt Fortune will let me; and I hope she will, for she said last Sunday I was the plague of her life."

"What did you do to make her say so?" said her friend, gravely.

"Only asked her for some books, ma'am."

"Well, my dear, I see I am getting upon another of your troubles, and we haven't time for that now. By your own account you have been much in fault yourself; and I trust you will find all things mend with your own mending. But now, there goes the sun!—and you and I must follow his example."

The lake ceased to gleam, and the houses of the village were less plainly to be seen; still the mountain heads were as bright as ever. Gradually the shadows crept up their sides while the grey of evening settled deeper and deeper upon the valley.

"There," said Ellen, "that's just what I was wondering at the other morning; only then the light shone upon the top of the mountains first and walked down, and now it leaves the bottom first and walks up."

I asked Mr. Van Brunt about it, and he could not tell me. That's another of my troubles—there's nobody that can tell me anything."

"Put me in mind of it to-morrow, and I'll try to make you understand it," said the lady, "but we must not tarry now."

It was easier going down than coming up. They soon arrived at the place where Ellen had left the road to take the wood-path.

"Here we part," said the lady. "Good-night,"

"Good-night, ma'am."

There was a kiss and a squeeze of the hand, but when Ellen would have turned away the lady still held her fast.

"You're an odd little girl," said she. "There is a question you have not asked me that I have been expecting. Do you know who I am?"

"No, ma'am."

"Don't you want to know?"

"Yes, ma'am, very much," said Ellen, laughing at her friend's look; "but mamma told me never to try to find out anything about other people that they didn't wish me to know, or that wasn't my business."

"Well, I think this is your business decidedly. Who are you going to ask for when you come to see me to-morrow? Will you ask for 'the young lady that lives in this house' or will you give a description of my nose, and eyes, and inches?"

Ellen laughed.

"My dear Ellen," said the lady, changing her tone, "do you know you please me very much? For one person that shows herself well-bred in this matter, there are a thousand, I think, that ask impertinent questions. I am very glad you are an exception to the common rule. But, dear Ellen, I am quite willing that you should know my name—it is Alice Humphreys. Now, kiss me again and run home; I have kept you too late. Good-night, my dear! Tell your aunt I beg she will allow you to take tea with me to-morrow."

They parted, and Ellen hastened homewards, urged by the rapidly growing dusk of the evening. She trod the green turf with a step lighter and quicker than it had been a few hours before, and she regained her home in much less time than it had taken her to come from thence to the mountain. Lights were in the kitchen and the table set; but though weary and faint she was willing to forego her supper rather than meet her aunt just then; so she stole quietly up to her room. She did not forget her friend's advice. She had no light; she could not read; but Ellen did pray. She did carry all her heart-sickness, her wants, and her woes, to that Friend whose ear is always

open to hear the cry of those who call upon Kim in truth; and then, relieved, refreshed, almost healed, she went to bed and slept sweetly.

CHAPTER XVI.

COUNSRI, CAKES, AND CAPTAIN PARRY.

EARLY next morning Ellen awoke with a sense that something pleasant had happened. Then the joyful reality darted into her mind, and jumping out of bed she set about her morning work with a better heart than she had been able to bring to it for many a long day. When she had finished she went to the window. She had found out how to keep it open now, by means of a big nail stuck in a hole under the sash. It was very early, and in the perfect stillness the soft gurgle of the little brook came distinctly to her ear. Ellen leaned her arms on the window-sill, and tasted the morning air; almost wondering at its sweetness and at the loveliness of field and sky and the bright eastern horizon. For days and days all had looked dark and sad.

There were two reasons for the change. In the first place, Ellen had made up her mind to go straight on in the path of duty; in the second place, she had found a friend. Her little heart bounded with delight and swelled with thankfulness at the thought of Alice Humphreys. She was once more at peace with herself, and had even some notion of being by and by at peace with her aunt; though a sad twinge came over her whenever she thought of her mother's letter.

"But there is only one way for me," she thought; "I'll do as that dear Miss Humphreys told me—it's good and early, and I shall have a fine time before breakfast yet to myself. And I'll get up so every morning and have it!—that'll be the very best plan I can hit upon."

As she thought this she drew forth her Bible from its place at the bottom of her trunk; and opening it at hazard she began to read the 18th chapter of Matthew. Some of it she did not quite understand; but she paused with pleasure at the 14th verse. "That means me," she thought. The 21st and 22nd verses struck her a good deal, but when she came to the last she was almost startled.

"There it is again!" she said. "That is exactly what that gentleman said to me. I thought I was forgiven, but how can I be, for I feel I have not forgiven Aunt Fortune."

Laying aside her book, Ellen knelt down; but this one thought so pressed upon her mind that she could think of scarce anything else; and her prayer this morning was an urgent and repeated petition that

she might be enabled "from her heart" to forgive her Aunt Fortune "all her trespasses." Poor Ellen! she felt it was very hard work. At the very minute she was striving to feel at peace with her aunt, one grievance after another would start up to remembrance, and she knew the feelings that met them were far enough from the spirit of forgiveness. In the midst of this she was called down. She rose with tears in her eyes, and "what shall I do?" in her heart. Bowing her head once more she earnestly prayed that if she could not yet *feel* right towards her aunt, she might be kept at least from acting or speaking wrong. Poor Ellen! In the heart is the spring of action; and she found it so this morning.

Her aunt and Mr. Van Brunt were already at the table. Ellen took her place in silence, for one look at her aunt's face told her that no "good morning" would be accepted. Miss Fortune was in a particularly bad humour, owing among other things to Mr. Van Brunt's having refused to eat his breakfast unless Ellen were called. An unlucky piece of kindness. She neither spoke to Ellen nor looked at her; Mr. Van Brunt did what in him lay to make amends. He helped her very carefully to the cold pork and potatoes, and handed her the well-piled platter of griddle-cakes.

"Here's the first buckwheats of the season," said he, "and I told Miss Fortune I warn't a going to eat one on 'em if you didn't come down to enjoy 'em along with us. Take two—take two!—you want 'em to keep each other hot."

Ellen's look and smile thanked him, as, following his advice, she covered one generous "buckwheat" with another as ample.

"That's the thing! Now, here's some prime maple. You like 'em, I guess, don't you?"

"I don't know yet—I have never seen any," said Ellen.

"Never seen buckwheats! why, they're 'most as good as my mother's splitters. Buckwheat cakes and maple molasses—that's food fit for a king, I think—when they're good; and Miss Fortune's are always first-rate."

Miss Fortune did not relent at all at this compliment.

"What makes you so white this morning?" Mr. Van Brunt presently went on. "You ain't well, be you?"

"Yes," said Ellen, doubtfully, "I'm well—"

"She's as well as I am, Mr. Van Brunt, if you don't go and put her up to any notions!" Miss Fortune said in a kind of choked voice.

Mr. Van Brunt hemmed, and said no more to the end of breakfast-time.

Ellen rather dreaded what was to come next, for her aunt's look was ominous. In dead silence the things were put away, and put up, and in course of washing and drying, when Miss Fortune suddenly broke forth.

"What did you do with yourself yesterday afternoon?"

"I was up on the mountain," said Ellen.

"What business had you up there?"

"I hadn't any business there."

"What did you go there for?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! you expect me to believe that? you call yourself a truth-teller, I suppose?"

"Mamma used to say I was," said poor Ellen, striving to swallow her feelings.

"Your mother! I dare say she took everything you said for gospel."

Ellen was silent, from sheer want of words that were pointed enough to suit her.

"I wish Morgan could have had the gumption to marry in his own country; but he must go running after a Scotch woman! A Yankee would have brought up his child to be worth something."

Ellen sat down the cup she was wiping.

"You don't know anything about my mother," she said. "You oughtn't to speak so—it's not right."

"Why ain't it right, I should like to know?" said Miss Fortune; "this is a free country, I guess. Our tongues ain't tied—we're all free here."

"I wish we were," muttered Ellen; "I know what I'd do."

"What would you do?" said Miss Fortune.

Ellen was silent. Her aunt repeated the question in a sharper tone.

"I oughtn't to say what I was going to," said Ellen; "I'd rather not."

"I don't care," said Miss Fortune; "you began, and you shall finish it. I will hear what it was."

"I was going to say, if we were all free I would run away."

"Well, that is a beautiful, well-behaved speech! I'm glad to have heard it. I admire it very much. Now, what were you doing yesterday up on the mountain? Please to go on wiping. There's a pile ready for you."

Ellen hesitated.

"Were you alone or with somebody?"

"I was alone part of the time."

"And who were you with the rest of the time?"

"Miss Humphreys."

"Miss Humphreys! what were you doing with her?"

"Talking."

"Did you ever see her before?"

"No, ma'am."

"Where did you find her?"

"She found me, up on the hill."

"What were you talking about?"

Ellen was silent.

"What were you talking about?" repeated Miss Fortune.

"I had rather not tell."

"And I had rather you *should* tell—so out with it."

"I was alone with Miss Humphreys," said Ellen; "and it is no matter what we were talking about—it doesn't concern anybody but her and me."

"Yes it does, it concerns me," said her aunt, "and I choose to know; what were you talking about?"

Ellen was silent.

"Will you tell me?"

"No," said Ellen, low but resolutely.

"I vow you're enough to try the patience of Job! Look here," said Miss Fortune, setting down what she had in her hands, "I *will* know! I don't care what it was, but you shall tell me, or I'll find a way to make you. I'll give you such a——"

"Stop! stop!" said Ellen, wildly, "you must not speak to me so! Mamma never did, and you have no *right* to! If mamma or papa were here you would not *dare* talk to me so."

The answer to this was a sharp box on the ear from Miss Fortune's wet hand. Half stunned, less by the blow than the tumult of feeling it roused, Ellen stood a moment, and then throwing down her towel she ran out of the room, shivering with passion, and brushing off the soapy water left on her face as if it had been her aunt's very hand. Violent tears burst forth as soon as she reached her own room,—tears at first of anger and mortification only; but conscience presently began to whisper, "You are wrong! you are wrong!" and tears of sorrow mingled with the others.

Alas! Ellen began to feel and acknowledge that indeed all was wrong. But what to do? There was just one comfort, the visit to Miss Humphreys in the afternoon. "She will tell me," thought Ellen; "she will help me. But in the meanwhile?"

Ellen had not much time to think ; her aunt called her down and set her to work. She was very busy, till dinner-time, and very unhappy.

As soon as possible after dinner she made her escape to her room that she might prepare for her walk. Conscience was not quite easy that she was going without the knowledge of her aunt. She had debated the question with herself and could not make up her mind to hazard losing her visit.

So she dressed herself very carefully. One of her dark merinoes was affectionately put on ; her single pair of white stockings ; shoes, ruffle, cape,—Ellen saw that all was faultlessly neat, just as her mother used to have it ; and the nice blue hood lay upon the bed ready to be put on the last thing, when she heard her aunt's voice calling.,

"Ellen ! come down and do your ironing—right away, now ! the irons are hot."

For one moment Ellen stood still in dismay ; then slowly undressed, dressed again, and went downstairs.

"Come ! you've been an age," said Miss Fortune : "now, make haste, there ain't but a handful ; and I want to mop up."

Ellen took courage again ; ironed away with right good will ; and as there was really but a handful of things she had soon done, even to taking off the ironing blanket and putting up the irons. In the meantime she had changed her mind as to stealing off without leave ; conscience was too strong for her ; and though with a beating heart, she told of Miss Humphreys' desire and her half engagement.

"You may go where you like—I am sure I do not care what you do with yourself," was Miss Fortune's reply.

Full of delight at this ungracious permission, Ellen fled upstairs, and dressing much quicker than before, was soon on her way.

But at first she went rather sadly. In spite of all her good resolves and wishes, everything that day had gone wrong ; and Ellen felt that the root of the evil was in her own heart. Some tears fell as she walked. Farther from her aunt's house, however, her spirits began to rise ; her foot fell lighter on the greensward. Hope and expectation quickened her steps ; and when at length she passed the little wood-path it was almost at a run. Not very far beyond that her glad eyes saw the house she was in quest of.

It was a large white house, not very white either, for its last dress of paint had grown old long ago. It stood close by the road, and the trees of the wood seemed to throng it round on every side. Ellen mounted the few steps that led to the front door, and knocked ; but

as she could only just reach the high knocker, she was not likely to alarm anybody with the noise she made. After a great many little faint raps, which if anybody heard them might easily have been mistaken for the attacks of some rat's teeth upon the wainscot, Ellen grew weary of her fruitless toil of standing on tip-toe, and resolved, though doubtfully, to go round the house and see if there was any other way of getting in. Turning the far corner, she saw a long, low outbuilding or shed jutting out from the side of the house. On the farther side of this Ellen found an elderly woman standing in front of the shed, which was there open and paved, and wringing some clothes out of a tub of water. She was a pleasant woman to look at, very trim and tidy, and a good-humoured eye and smile when she saw Ellen. Ellen made up to her and asked for Miss Humphreys.

"Why, where in the world did you come from?" said the woman, "I don't receive company at the back of the house."

"I knocked at the front door till I was tired," said Ellen, smiling in return.

"Miss Alice must ha' been asleep. Now, honey, you have come so far round to find me, will you go a little farther and find Miss Alice? Just go round this corner and keep straight along till you come to the glass door—there you'll find her. Stop!—maybe she's asleep; I may as well go along with you myself."

She wrung the water from her hands and led the way.

A little space of green grass stretched in front of the shed, and Ellen found it extended all along that side of the house like a very narrow lawn; at the edge of it shot up the high forest trees; nothing between them and the house but the smooth grass and a narrow worn footpath. The woods were now all brown stems, except here and there a superb hemlock and some scattered silvery birches. But the grass was still green, and the last day of the Indian summer hung its soft veil over all; the foliage of the forest was hardly missed. They passed another hall door, opposite the one where Ellen had tried her strength and patience upon the knocker; a little farther on they paused at the glass door. One step led to it. Ellen's conductress looked in first through one of the panes, and then opening the door motioned her to enter.

"Here you are, my new acquaintance," said Alice, smiling and kissing her. "I began to think something was the matter, you tarried so late. We don't keep fashionable hours in the country, you know. But I'm very glad to see you. Take off your things and lay them on that settee by the door. You see I've a settee for summer

and a sofa for winter ; for here I am, in this room, at all times of the year ; and a very pleasant room I think it, don't you ? ”

“ Yes, indeed I do, ma'am, ” said Ellen, pulling off her last glove.

“ Ah, but wait till you have taken tea with me half-a-dozen times, and then see if you don't say it is pleasant. Nothing can be so pleasant that is quite new. But now come here and look out of this window, or door, whichever you choose to call it. Do you see what a beautiful view I have here ? The wood was just as thick all along as it is on the right and left ; I felt half smothered to be so shut in, so I got my brother and Thomas to take axes and go to work there ; and many a large tree they cut down for me, till you see they opened a way through the woods for the view of that beautiful stretch of country. I should grow melancholy if I had that wall of trees pressing on my vision all the time ; it always comforts me to look off, far away, to those distant blue hills. ”

It was a very beautiful extent of woodland, meadow, and hill, that was seen picture-fashion through the gap cut in the forest ; the wall of trees on each side serving as a frame to shut it in, and the descent of the mountain, from almost the edge of the lawn, being very rapid. The opening had been skilfully cut ; the effect was remarkable and very fine ; the light on the picture being often quite different from that on the frame or on the hither side of the frame.

“ Now, Ellen, ” said Alice turning from the window, “ take a good look at my room. I want you to know it and feel at home in it ; for whenever you can run away from your aunt's this is your home—do you understand ? ”

A smile was on each face. Ellen felt that she was understanding it very fast.

“ Here, next the door, you see, is my summer settee ; and in summer I very often walk out of doors to accommodate people on the grass plat. I have a great fancy for taking tea out of doors, Ellen, in warm weather ; and if you do not mind a mosquito or two, I shall always be happy to have your company. That door opens into the hall ; look out and see, for I want you to get the geography of the house. That odd-looking, lumbering, painted concern is my cabinet of curiosities. I tried my best to make the carpenter man at Thirlwall understand what sort of a thing I wanted, and did all but show him how to make it ; but as the southerners say, ‘ he ' hasn't made it right no how. ’ There I keep my dried flowers, my minerals, and a very odd collection of curious things of all sorts that I am constantly picking up. I'll show you them some day, Ellen. ”

"On that other side, you see, is my winter sofa. It's a very comfortable resting-place, I can tell you, Ellen, as I have proved by many a sweet nap; and its old chintz covers are very pleasant to me, for I remember them as far back as I remember anything."

There was a sigh here; but Alice passed on and opened a door near the end of the sofa.

"Look in here, Ellen; this is my bedroom."

"Oh, how lovely!" Ellen exclaimed.

The carpet covered only the middle of the floor; the rest was painted white. The furniture was common but neat as wax. Ample curtains of white-dimity clothed the three windows, and lightly draped the bed. The toilet-table was covered with snow-white muslin, and by the toilet-cushion stood, late as it was, a glass of flowers.

There were two things in the room that Alice had not mentioned, and while she mended the fire Ellen looked at them. One was the portrait of a gentleman, grave and good-looking; this had very little of her attention. The other was the counter-portrait of a lady; a fine dignified countenance that had a charm for Ellen. It hung over the fireplace in an excellent light; and the mild eye and somewhat of a peculiar expression about the mouth bore such likeness to Alice, though older, that Ellen had no doubt who it was.

Alice presently drew a chair close to Ellen's side, and kissed her.

"I trust, my child," she said, "that you feel better to-day than you did yesterday."

"Oh, I do, ma'am,—a great deal better," Ellen answered.

"Then I hope the reason is that you have returned to your duty, and are resolved, not to be a Christian by-and-by, but to lead a Christian's life now?"

"I have resolved so, ma'am,—I did resolve so last night and this morning; but yet I have been doing nothing but wrong all to-day."

Alice was silent. Ellen's lips quivered for a moment, and then she went on—

"Oh, ma'am, how I have wanted to see you to-day to tell me what I *should* do! I resolved and resolved this morning, and then as soon as I got downstairs I began to have bad feelings towards Aunt Fortune, and I have been full of bad feelings all day; and I couldn't help it."

"It will not do to say that we cannot help what is wrong, Ellen—What is the reason that you have bad feelings toward your aunt?"

"I think it is Aunt Fortune's fault," said Ellen, raising her head; "I don't think it is mine. If she had behaved well to me I should have behaved well to her. I meant to, I am sure."

"Do you mean to say that you do not think you have been in fault at all in the matter?"

"No, ma'am, I do not mean to say that. I have been very much in fault—very often—I know that. I get very angry and vexed, and sometimes I say nothing, but sometimes I get out of all patience and say things I ought not. I did so to-day; but it is so very hard to keep still when I am in such a passion; and now I have got to feel so towards Aunt Fortune that I don't like the sight of her; I hate the very look of her bonnet hanging up on the wall. I know it isn't right; and it makes me miserable."

Ellen's tears came faster than her words.

"Ellen, my child," said Alice after a while, "there is but one way. You know what I said to you yesterday?"

"I know it, but, dear Miss Alice, in my reading this morning I came to that verse that speaks about not being forgiven if we do not forgive others; and oh! how it troubles me; for I can't feel that I forgive Aunt Fortune; I feel vexed whenever the thought of her comes into my head; and how can I behave right to her while I feel so?"

"You are right there, my dear; you cannot indeed; the heart must be set right before the life can be."

"But what shall I do to set it right?"

"You acknowledge yourself in fault—have you made all the amends you can? Have you, as soon as you have seen yourself in the wrong, gone to your Aunt Fortune and acknowledged it, and humbly asked her pardon?"

Ellen answered "no" in a low voice.

"Then, my child, your duty is plain before you. The next thing after doing wrong is to make all the amends in your power; confess your fault, and ask forgiveness, both of God and man. Pride struggles against it,—I see yours does,—but, my child, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'" Ellen burst into tears and cried heartily.

"But it is so hard to forgive," sobbed Ellen.

"Hard? yes, it is hard when our hearts are so. But there is little love to Christ and no just sense of His love to us in the heart that finds it hard. Pride and selfishness make it hard; the heart full of love to the dear Saviour *cannot* lay up offences against itself."

"I have said quite enough," said Alice, after a pause; "you know what you want, my dear Ellen, and what you ought to do. I shall

leave you for a little while to change my dress, for I have been walking and riding all the morning. Make a good use of the time while I am gone."

Ellen did make good use of the time. When Alice returned she met her with another face than she had worn all that day, humbler and quieter; and flinging her arms around her, she said—

"I will ask Aunt Fortune's forgiveness; I feel I can do it now."

"And how about *forgiving*, Ellen?"

"I think God will help me to forgive her," said Ellen; "I have asked Him. At any rate I will ask her to forgive me. But oh, Miss Alice! what would have become of me without you!"

"Don't lean upon me, dear Ellen; remember you have a better Friend than I always near you; trust in Him; if I have done you any good, don't forget it was He brought me to you yesterday afternoon. Well, now to change the subject—at what o'clock did you dine to-day?"

"I don't know, ma'am,—at the same time we always do, I believe."

"And that is twelve o'clock, isn't it? Then I suppose you would have no objection to an early tea?"

"No, ma'am, —whenever you please," said Ellen, laughing.

"Well, the kettle is just going to boil; you shall have tea in a trice. Come, Ellen, you and I will go and set the tea-table."

Ellen was very happy arranging the cups and saucers and other things that Alice handed her from the cupboard; and when a few minutes after the tea and the cakes came in, and she and Alice were cosily seated, poor Ellen hardly knew herself in such a pleasant state of things.

CHAPTER XVII.

' DIFFICULTY OF DOING RIGHT.

"ELLEN, dear," said Alice, as she poured out Ellen's second cup of tea, "have we run through the list of your troubles?"

"Oh no, Miss Alice, indeed we haven't; but we have got through the worst."

"Is the next one so bad it would spoil our supper?"

"No," said Ellen, "it couldn't do that, but it's bad enough though; it's about my not going to school. Miss Alice, I promised myself I would learn so much while mamma was away, and surprise her when she came back, and instead of that I am not learning anything. I

don't mean not learning *anything*," said Ellen, correcting herself ; "but I can't do much. When I found Aunt Fortune wasn't going to send me to school I determined I would try to study by myself ; and I have tried ; but I can't get along."

"Well, now, don't lay down your knife and fork and look so doleful," said Alice, smiling ; "this is a matter I can help you in. What are you studying ?"

"Some things I can manage well enough," said Ellen, "the easy things ; but I cannot understand my arithmetic without someone to explain it to me ; and French I can do nothing at all with, and that is what I wanted to learn most of all ; and often I want to ask questions about my history."

"Suppose," said Alice, "you go on studying by yourself as much and as well as you can, and bring your books up to me two or three times a week ; I will hear and explain and answer questions to your heart's content, unless you should be too hard for me. What do you say to that ?"

Ellen said nothing to it, but the colour that rushed to her cheeks, the surprised look of delight, were answer enough.

"It will do, then," said Alice ; "and I have no doubt we shall untie the knot of those arithmetical problems very soon. But, Ellen, my dear, I cannot help you in French, for I do not know it myself. What will you do about that ?"

"I don't know, ma'am ; I am sorry."

"So am I for your sake. I can help you in Latin, if that would be any comfort to you."

"It wouldn't be much comfort to me," said Ellen, laughing ; "mamma wanted me to learn Latin, but I wanted to learn French a great deal more."

"Permit me to ask if you know English ?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I hope so."

"Do you ? I am very happy to make your acquaintance then, for the number of young ladies who *do* know English is in my opinion remarkably small. Are you sure of the fact, Ellen ?"

"Why, yes, Miss Alice."

"Will you undertake to write me a note of two pages that shall not have one fault of grammar, nor one word spelt wrong, nor anything in it that is not good English ?"

"Yes, ma'am, if you wish it. I hope I can write a note that long without making mistakes."

Alice smiled.

"I will not stop to enquire," she said, "whether *that long* is Latin, or French ; but, Ellen, my dear, it is not English."

Ellen blushed a little, though she laughed too.

"I believe I have got into the way of saying that by hearing Aunt Fortune and Mr. Van Brunt say it ; I don't think I ever did before I came here."

"What are you so anxious to learn French for?"

"Mamma knows it, and I have often heard her talk French with a great many people, and she wanted me to learn it ; she said there were a great many French books I ought to read."

"That last is true, no doubt. Ellen, I will make a bargain with you,—if you will study English with me, I will study French with you."

"Dear Miss Alice," said Ellen, caressing her, "I'll do it without that ; I'll study anything you please."

"Dear Ellen, I believe you would. But I should like to know it for my own sake ; we'll study it together. We shall get along nicely, I have no doubt : we can learn to read it, at least, and that is the main point."

"But how shall we know what to call the words?" said Ellen, doubtfully.

"That is a grave question," said Alice, smiling. "I am afraid we should hit upon a style of pronunciation that a Frenchman would make nothing of. I have it !" she exclaimed, clapping her hands ; "Ellen, I have an old friend upon the mountain who will give us exactly what we want,—my old friend, Mrs. Vawse."

"Mrs. Vawse !" repeated Ellen ; "not the grandmother of that Nancy Vawse."

"The very same. Her name is not Vawse ; the country people call it so, and I being one of the country people have fallen into the way of it, but her real name is Vosier. She was born a Swiss, and brought up in a wealthy French family, as the personal attendant of a young lady to whom she became exceedingly attached. This lady finally married an American gentleman ; and so great was Mrs. Vawse's love to her that she left country and family to follow her here. In a few years her mistress died ; she married ; and since that time she has been tossed from trouble to trouble ; a perfect sea of troubles—till now she is left like a wreck upon this mountain-top. A

fine wreck she is ! I go to see her very often, and next time I will call for you, and we will propose our French plan ; nothing will please her better, I know. Come out on the lawn, Ellen, and we will let Margery clear away."

"What a pleasant face Margery has," said Ellen, as the door closed behind them ; "and what a pleasant way she has of speaking. I like to hear her—the words come out so clear, and I don't know how, but not like other people."

"You have a quick ear, Ellen ; you are very right. Margery had lived too long in England before she came here to lose her trick of speech afterwards. But Thomas speaks as thick as a Yankee, and always did."

"Then Margery is English?" said Ellen.

"To be sure. She came over with us twelve years ago for the pure love of my father and mother ; and I believe now she looks upon John and me as her own children. I think she could scarcely love us more if we were so in truth. Thomas, you haven't seen Thomas yet, have you?"

"No."

"He is an excellent good man in his way, and as faithful as the day is long ; but he isn't equal to his wife. Perhaps I am partial ; Margery came to America for the love of us, and Thomas came for the love of Margery ; there's a difference."

"Then you are English, too, Miss Alice?"

"Well, what of that ? you won't love me the less, will you?"

"Oh, no," said Ellen ; "my own mother came from Scotland."

"I am English born, Ellen, but you may count me half American if you like, for I have spent rather more than half my life here. Come this way, Ellen, and I'll show you my garden."

They quitted the house by a little steep path leading down the mountain, which in two or three minutes brought them to a clear bit of ground. It was not large, but lying very prettily among the trees, with an open view to the east and south-east. On the extreme edge and at the lower end of it was fixed a rude bench, well sheltered by the towering forest trees. Here Alice and Ellen sat down.

"How fair it is !" said Alice, musingly ; "how fair and lovely ! Look at those long shadows of the mountains, Ellen ; and how bright the light is on the far hills. It won't be so long. A little while more, and our Indian summer will be over ; and then the clouds, the frost, and the wind, and the snow. Well, let them come."

"I wish they wouldn't, I am sure," said Ellen.

"Why! all seasons have their pleasures. I like the cold very much."

"I guess you wouldn't, Miss Alice, if you had to wash every morning where I do."

"Why, where is that?"

"Down at the spout."

"At the *spout*—what is that, pray?"

"The spout of water, ma'am, just down a little way from the kitchen door. The water comes in a little long trough from a spring at the back of the pig-field, and at the end of the trough where it pours out, is the spout."

"Have you no conveniences for washing in your room?"

"Not a sign of such a thing, ma'am. I have washed at the spout ever since I have been here," said Ellen, laughing.

"And do the pigs share the water with you?"

"The pigs? Oh, no, ma'am; the trough is raised up from the ground on little heaps of stones; they can't get at the water—unless they drink at the spring."

"Well, Ellen, I must say that it is rather uncomfortable, even without any danger of four-footed society."

"It isn't so bad just now," said Ellen, "in this warm weather, but in that cold time we had a week or two back, oh, how disagreeable it was!"

"Now, Ellen, love, do you know I must send you away? Do you see the sunlight has quitted those distant hills? and it will be quite gone soon. You must hasten home."

Ellen made no answer. Alice had taken her on her lap again, and she was nestling there with her friend's arms wrapped around her. Both were quite still for a minute.

"Next week, if nothing happens, we will begin to be busy with our books. You shall come to me on Tuesday and Friday; and all the other days you must study as hard as you can at home, for I am very particular, I forewarn you."

"But suppose Aunt Fortune should not let me come?" said Ellen, without stirring.

"Oh, she will. You need not speak about it; I'll come down and ask her myself, and nobody ever refuses me anything."

"I shouldn't think they would," said Ellen.

"Then don't you set the first example," said Alice, laughingly. "I

ask you to be cheerful and happy, and grow better and wiser every day."

"Dear Miss Alice! How can I promise that?"

"Dear Ellen, it is very easy. There is One who has promised to hear and answer you when you cry to Him; He will make you in His own likeness again; and to know and love Him and not be happy is impossible. That blessed Saviour!" said Alice; "oh, what should you and I do without Him, Ellen? 'As rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' How beautiful! how true! how often I think of that!"

Ellen was silent, though entering into the feeling of the words.

"Remember Him, dear Ellen; remember your best friend. Learn more of Christ, our dear Saviour, and you can't help but be happy. Never fancy you are helpless and friendless while you have Him to go to. Whenever you feel wearied and sorry, flee to the shadow of that great rock; will you? and do you understand me?"

"Yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am," said Ellen, as she lifted her lips to kiss her friend. Alice heartily returned the kiss, and pressing Ellen in her arms, said—

"Now, Ellen, dear, you *must* go; I dare not keep you any longer. It will be too late now, I fear, before you reach home."

Quick they mounted the little path again, and soon were at the house; and Ellen was putting on her things.

"Next Tuesday, remember,—but before that! Sunday,—you are to spend Sunday with me; come bright and early."

"How early?"

"Oh, as early as you please—before breakfast—and our Sunday morning breakfasts aren't late, Ellen; we have to set off betimes to go to church."

Kisses and good-byes; and then Ellen was running down the road at a great rate, for twilight was beginning to gather, and she had a good way to go.

She ran till out of breath; then walked a while to gather breath; then ran again. Running down hill is a pretty quick way of travelling; so before very long she saw her aunt's house at a distance. She walked now. She had come all the way in good spirits, though with a sense upon her mind of something disagreeable to come; when she saw the house this disagreeable something swallowed up all her thoughts, and she walked leisurely on, pondering what she had to do, and what she was like to meet in the doing of it.

"If Aunt Fortune should be in a bad humour—and say something to vex me—but I'll not be vexed. But it will be very hard to help it ; but I *will not* be vexed ; I have done wrong, and I'll tell her so, and ask her to forgive me."

She paused in the shed and looked through the window to see what was the promise of things within. Not good ; her aunt's step sounded heavy and ominous ; Ellen guessed she was not in a pleasant state of mind.

"I have come home rather late," said Ellen, pleasantly ; "shall I help you, Aunt Fortune ?"

Her aunt cast a look at her.

"Yes, you may help me. Go and put on a pair of white gloves and a silk apron, and then you'll be ready."

Ellen looked down at herself. "Oh ! my merino ; I forgot about that. I'll go and change it."

Miss Fortune said nothing, and Ellen went.

When she came back the things were all wiped, and as she was about to put some of them away, her aunt took them out of her hands, bidding her "go and sit down."

Ellen obeyed and was mute ; while Miss Fortune dashed round with a display of energy there seemed to be no particular call for, and speedily had everything in its place, and all straight and square about the kitchen. When she was, as a last thing, brushing the crumbs from the floor into the fire, she broke the silence again.

"What did you come home for to-night ? Why didn't you stay at Mr. Humphreys' ?"

"Miss Alice didn't ask me."

"That means, I suppose, that you would if she had ?"

"I don't know, ma'am ; Miss Alice wouldn't have asked me to do anything that wasn't right."

"Oh, no ! of course not ; Miss Alice is a piece of perfection ; everybody says so ; and I suppose you'd sing the same song, who haven't seen her three times."

"Indeed I would," said Ellen ; "I could have told that in one seeing. I'd do anything in the world for Miss Alice."

"Ay—I dare say—that's the way of it. You can show not one bit of goodness or pleasantness to the person that does the most for you, and has all the care of you, but the first stranger that comes along you can be all honey to them, and make yourself out too good for common folks, and go and tell great tales how you are used at home,

"I suppose. I am sick of it!" said Miss Fortune, setting up the andirons and throwing the tongs and shovel into the corner in a way that made the iron ring again. "One might as good be a stepmother at once, and done with it! Come, light your candle and be off; I want you out of the way; I can't do anything with half-a-dozen people about."

Ellen rose. "I want to say something to you first, Aunt Fortune."

"Say it and be quick; I haven't time to stand talking."

"Aunt Fortune," said Ellen, stumbling over her words, "I want to tell you that I know I was wrong this morning, and I am sorry, and I hope you'll forgive me."

A kind of indignant laugh escaped from Miss Fortune's lips.

"It's easy talking; I'd rather have acting. I'd rather see people mend their ways than stand and make speeches about them. Being sorry don't help the matter much."

"But I'll try not to do so any more," said Ellen.

"When I see you don't I shall begin to think there is something in it. Actions speak louder than words."

"Well, I will try not to, at any rate," said Ellen, sighing.

"I'll tell you what," said Miss Fortune, "if you want me to believe that all this talk means something, I'll tell you what you shall do,—you shall just tell Mr. Van Brunt to-morrow about it all, and how ugly you have been these two days, and let him know you were wrong and I was right. I believe he thinks you cannot do anything wrong, and I should like him to know it for once."

Ellen struggled hard with herself before she could speak; Miss Fortune's lips began to wear a scornful smile.

"I'll tell him!" said Ellen, at length; "I'll tell him I was wrong, if you wish me to."

"I do wish it. I like people's eyes to be opened. It'll do him good, I guess, and you too. Now, have you anything more to say?"

Ellen hesitated; the colour came and went; she knew it wasn't a good time, but how could she wait?

"Aunt Fortune," she said, "you know I told you I behaved very ill about that letter,—won't you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? yes, child; I don't care anything about it."

"Then will you be so good as to let me have my letter again?" said Ellen, timidly.

"Oh, I can't be bothered to look for it now; I'll see about it some-

other time ; take your candle and go to bed now, if you've nothing more to say."

Ellen took her candle and went. Some tears were wrung from her hurt feeling and disappointment ; but she had the smile of conscience, and, as she believed, of Him, whose witness conscience is. She remembered that "great rock in a weary land," and she went to sleep in the shadow of it.

The next day was Saturday. Ellen was up early, and after carefully performing her toilette duties, she had a nice long hour before it was time to go downstairs. The use she made of this hour had fitted her to do cheerfully and well her morning work ; and Ellen would have sat down to breakfast in excellent spirits if it had not been for her promised disclosure to Mr. Van Brunt. It vexed her a little. "I told Aunt Fortune—that was all right ; but why I should be obliged to tell Mr. Van Brunt I don't know. But if it convinces Aunt Fortune that I am in earnest and meant what I say, then I had better."

Mr. Van Brunt looked uncommonly grave, she thought ; her aunt uncommonly satisfied. Ellen had more than half a guess at the reason of both ; but make up her mind to speak she could not during all breakfast time. She ate without knowing what she was eating.

Mr. Van Brunt at length, having finished his meal without saying a syllable, arose, and was about to go forth, when Miss Fortune stopped him.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Van Brunt," she said, "Ellen has something to say to you. Go ahead, Ellen."

Ellen felt, rather than saw, the smile with which these words were spoken. She crimsoned and hesitated.

"Ellen and I had some trouble yesterday," said Miss Fortune, "and she wants to tell you about it." Mr. Van Brunt stood gravely waiting.

Ellen raised her eyes, which were full, to his face. "Mr. Van Brunt," she said, "Aunt Fortune wants me to tell you what I told her last night—that I knew I behaved as I ought not to her yesterday, and the day before, and other times."

"And what made you do that?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Tell him," said Miss Fortune, colouring, "that you were in the wrong and I was in the right—then he'll believe it, I suppose."

"I was wrong," said Ellen.

"And I was right," said Miss Fortune.

Ellen was silent. Mr. Van Brunt looked from one to the other,

"Speak," said Miss Fortune, "tell him the whole, if you mean what you say."

"I can't," said Ellen.

"Why, you said you were wrong," said Miss Fortune; "that's only half of the business; if you were wrong I was right. Why don't you say so, and not make such a shilly-shally piece of work of it?"

"I said I was wrong," said Ellen, "and so I was; but I never said you were right, Aunt Fortune, and I don't think so."

These words, though moderately spoken, were enough to put Miss Fortune in a rage.

"What did I do that was wrong?" she said; "come, I should like to know. What was it, Ellen! Out with it; say everything you can think of; stop and hear it, Mr. Van Brunt. Come, Ellen, let's hear the whole!"

"Thank you, ma'am, I've heerd quite enough," said that gentleman, as he went out and closed the door.

"And I have said too much," said Ellen. "Pray forgive me, Aunt Fortune. I shouldn't have said that if you hadn't pressed me so; I forgot myself a moment. I am sorry I said that."

"Forgot yourself!" said Miss Fortune; "I wish you'd forget yourself out of my house. Please to forget the place where I am for to-day, anyhow; I've got enough of you for one while."

Ellen went sorrowfully to her own room. "Why couldn't I be quiet?" said Ellen. "If I had only held my tongue that unfortunate minute! what possessed me to say that?"

Strong passion—strong pride,—both long unbroken; and Ellen had yet to learn that many a prayer and many a tear, much watchfulness, much help from on high, must be hers before she could be thoroughly dispossessed of these evil spirits.

One thought in her solitary room that day drew streams of tears down Ellen's cheeks. "My letter—my letter! what shall I do to get you!" she said to herself. "It serves me right; I oughtn't to have got in a passion; oh, I have got a lesson this time."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOSES CARE ON THE CAT'S BACK.

THE Sunday with Alice met all Ellen's hopes. She wrote a very long letter to her mother, giving the full history of the day. How pleasantly they had ridden to church on the pretty grey pony, she half the way

and Alice the other half, talking to each other all the while ; for Mr. Humphreys had ridden on before. How lovely the road was, "wind-ing about round the mountain, up and down," and with such a wide, fair view, and "part of the time close along by the edge of the water." This had been Ellen's first ride on horseback. Then the letter described the little Carra-carra church, Mr. Humphreys' excellent sermon, "every word of which she could understand ;" Alice's Sunday School, in which she was sole teacher, and how Ellen had four little ones put under *her* care ; and told how while Mr. Humphreys went on to hold a second service at a village some six miles off, his daughter ministered to two infirm old women at Carra-carra, reading and explaining the Bible to one, and to the other, who was blind, repeating the whole substance of her father's sermon. "Miss Alice told me that nobody could enjoy a sermon better than that old woman, but she cannot go out, and every Sunday Miss Alice goes and preaches to her, she says." How Ellen went home in the boat with Thomas and Margery, and spent the rest of the day and night also at the parsonage ; and how polite and kind Mr. Humphreys had been. "He's a very grave-looking man indeed," said the letter, "and not a bit like Miss Alice ; he is a great deal older than I expected."

This letter was much the longest Ellen had ever written in her life ; but she had set her heart on having her mother's sympathy in her new pleasures, though not to be had but after the lapse of many weeks and beyond a sad interval of land and sea. Still she must have it ; and her little fingers travelled busily over the paper hour after hour, as she found time, till the long epistle was finished. She was hard at work at it Tuesday afternoon when her aunt called her down ; and obeying the call, to her great surprise and delight, she found Alice seated in the chimney corner and chatting away with her old grandmother, who looked remarkably pleased. Miss Fortune was bustling round as usual, looking at nobody, though putting in her word now and then.

"Come, Ellen," said Alice, "get your bonnet ; I am going up the mountain to see Mrs. Vawse, and your aunt has given leave for you to go with me. Wrap yourself up well, for it is not warm."

Without waiting for a word of answer, Ellen joyfully ran off.

"You have chosen rather an ugly day for your walk, Miss Alice."

"Can't expect pretty days in December, Miss Fortune. I am only too happy it doesn't storm ; it will be to-morrow, I think."

"You'll stop up on the mountain till supper-time, I guess, won't you?" said Miss Fortune.

"Oh, yes ; I shall want something to fortify me before coming home after such a long tramp. You see I have brought a basket along. I thought it safest to take a loaf of bread with me, for no one can tell what may be in Mrs. Vawse's cupboard, and to lose our supper is not a thing to be thought of."

"Well, have you looked out for butter, too? for you'll find none where you're going. I don't know how the old lady lives up there, but it's without butter, I reckon."

"I have taken care of that, too, thank you, Miss Fortune. You see I'm a far-sighted creature."

"Ellen," said her aunt, as Ellen now, cloaked and hooded, came in, "go into the buttery and fetch out one of them pumpkin pies to put in Miss Alice's basket."

"Thank you, Miss Fortune," said Alice, smiling, "I shall tell Mrs. Vawse who it comes from. Now, my dear, let's be off."

Ellen was quite ready to be off. But no sooner had she opened the outer shed door than her voice was heard in astonishment.

"A cat ! What cat is this? Miss Alice ! look here ; here's the Captain, I do believe."

"Here is the Captain, indeed," said Alice. "Oh, pussy, pussy, what have you come for?"

Pussy walked up to his mistress, and stroking himself and his great tail against her dress, seemed to say that he had come for her sake.

"He was sitting as gravely as possible," said Ellen, "on the stones just outside the door, waiting for the door to be opened. How could he have come there?"

"Why, he has followed me," said Alice ; "he often does ; but I came quick and I thought I had left him at home to-day. This is too long an expedition for him."

"Can't you send him back?" said Ellen.

"No, my dear ; he is the most sensible of cats, no doubt, but he could by no means understand such an order. No, we must let him trot on after us, and when he gets tired I will carry him."

They set off with a quick pace which the weather forbade them to slacken. It was somewhat as Miss Fortune had said, an ugly afternoon. The clouds hung cold and grey, and the air had a raw chill feeling that betokened a coming snow. The wind blew strong too, and seemed to carry the chillness through all manner of wrappers. Alice and Ellen, however, did not much care for it ; they walked and ran by turns, only stopping once in a while when poor Captain's uneasy cry warned them they had left him too far behind. As they

neared the foot of the mountain they were somewhat sheltered from the wind, and could afford to walk more slowly.

"How is it between you and your Aunt Fortune now?" said Alice.

"Oh, we don't get on well at all, Miss Alice, and I don't know exactly what to do. You know I said I would ask her pardon. Well, I did, that same night after I got home, but it was very disagreeable. She didn't seem to believe I was in earnest, and wanted me to tell Mr. Van Brunt that I had been wrong. I thought that was rather hard; but at any rate I said I would; and next morning I did tell him so; and I believe all would have gone well if I could only have been quiet; but Aunt Fortune said something that vexed me, and almost before I knew it I said something that vexed her dreadfully. It was nothing very bad, Miss Alice, though I ought not to have said it; and I was sorry two minutes after, but I just got provoked; and what shall I do, for it's so hard to prevent it?"

"The only thing I know," said Alice, with a slight smile, "is to be full of that charity which among other lovely ways of showing itself, has this,—that it is 'not easily provoked.'"

"I am easily provoked," said Ellen.

"Then you know one thing, at any rate, that is to be watched and prayed and guarded against."

"I tried so hard to keep quiet that morning," said Ellen, "and if I only could have let that unlucky speech alone—but somehow I forgot myself, and I just told her what I thought."

"Which it is very often best not to do."

"I do believe," said Ellen, "Aunt Fortune would like to have Mr. Van Brunt not like me."

"Take care, dear Ellen, don't take up the trade of suspecting evil; you could not take up a worse; and even when it is forced upon you, see as little of it as you can, and forget as soon as you can what you see."

They now began to go up the mountain, and the path became in places steep and rugged enough. "There is an easier way on the other side," said Alice, "but this is the nearest for us."

The travellers went on with good will, and as they rose higher they felt it grow more cold and bleak; the woods gave them less shelter, and the wind swept round the mountain head and over them with great force, making their way quite difficult.

"Courage, Ellen!" said Alice, as they struggled on, "we'll soon be there."

"I wonder," said the panting Ellen, as making an effort she came

up alongside of Alice—"I wonder why Mrs. Vawse will live in such a disagreeable place?"

"It is not disagreeable to her, Ellen; though I must say I should not like to have too much of this wind."

"But does she really like to live up here better than down below where it is warmer?—and all alone too?"

"Yes, she does. Ask her why, Ellen, and see what she will tell you. She likes it so much better that this little cottage was built on purpose for her ten years ago, by a good old friend of hers, a connection of the lady whom she followed to this country."

"Well," said Ellen, "she must have a queer taste—that is all I can say."

They were now within a few easy steps of the house, which did not look so uncomfortable when they came close to it. It was small and low, of only one story, though it is true the roof ran up very steep to a high and sharp gable. It was perched so snugly in a niche of the hill that the little yard was completely sheltered with a high wall of rock. The house itself stood out more boldly, and caught pretty well near all the winds that blew; but so, Alice informed Ellen, the inmate liked to have it.

"And that roof," said Alice, "she begged Mr. Marshman when the cottage was building that the roof might be high and pointed; she said her eyes were tired with the low roofs of this country, and if he would have it made so it would be a great relief to them."

The odd roof Ellen thought was pretty. But they now reached the door, protected with a deep porch. Alice entered and knocked at the other door. They were bade to come in. A woman was there stepping briskly back and forth before a large spinning-wheel. She half turned her head to see who the comers were, then stopped her wheel instantly, and came to meet them with open arms.

"Miss Alice! dear Miss Alice, how glad I am to see you."

"And you, dear Mrs. Vawse," said Alice, kissing her. "Here's another friend you must welcome for my sake—little Ellen Montgomery."

"I am very glad to see Miss Ellen," said the old woman, kissing her also. She turned from Ellen again to Miss Alice.

"It's a long while that I have not seen you, dear,—not since you went to Mrs. Marshman's. And what a day you have chosen to come at last!"

"I can't help that," said Alice, pulling off her bonnet, "I couldn't wait any longer. I wanted to see you dolefully, Mrs. Vawse."

"Why, my dear? what's the matter? I have wanted to see *you*, but not dolefully."

"That's the very thing, Mrs. Vawse; I wanted to see you to get a lesson of quiet contentment."

"I never thought you wanted such a lesson, Miss Alice. What's the matter?"

"I can't get over John's going away."

Her lip trembled and her eye was swimming as she said so. The old woman passed her hands over the gentle head and kissed her brow.

"So I thought—so I felt, when my mistress died; and my husband; and my sons, one after the other. But now I think I can say with Paul, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.'"

"Then surely I ought to be," said Alice.

"It is not till one loses one's hold of other things and looks to Jesus alone that one finds how much He can do. 'There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;' but I never knew all that meant till I had no other friends to lean upon; nay, I should not say *no* other friends; but my dearest were taken away. You have *your* dearest still, Miss Alice."

"Two of them," said Alice, faintly; "and hardly that now."

"I have not one," said the old woman, "I have not one; but my home is in heaven, and my Saviour is there preparing a place for me. I know it—I am sure of it—and I can wait a little while, and rejoice all the while I am waiting. Dearest Miss Alice—'none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate;' don't you believe that?"

"I do surely, Mrs. Vawse," said Alice, wiping away a tear or two, "but I forget it sometimes; or the pressure of present pain is too much for all that faith and hope can do."

"It hinders faith and hope from acting—that is the trouble. 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'"

"I know it, Mrs. Vawse—I know it all; but it does me good to hear you say it. I thought I should become accustomed to John's absence, but I do not at all."

"My dear love," said the old lady, "it sorrows me much to hear you speak so; I would take away this trial from you if I could; but He knows best. Seek to live nearer to the Lord, dear Miss Alice, and He will give you much more than He has taken away."

Alice again brushed away some tears.

"I felt I must come and see you to-day," said she, "and you have comforted me already. The sound of your voice always does me good. I catch courage and patience from you, I believe."

"As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.' How did you leave Mr. and Mrs. Marshman? and has Mr. George returned yet?"

Drawing their chairs together, a close conversation began. Ellen had been painfully interested and surprised by what went before, but the low tone of voice now seemed to be not meant for her ear, and turning away her attention, she amused herself with taking a general survey.

It was easy to see that Mrs. Vawse lived in this room, and probably had no other to live in. Her bed was in one corner; cupboards filled the deep recesses on each side of the chimney, and in the wide fireplace the crane and the hooks and trammels hanging upon it showed that the bedroom and sitting-room was the kitchen too. Most of the floor was covered with a thick rag carpet. The panes of glass in the little windows were clean and bright as panes of glass could be made; the hearth was clean swept up; the cupboard doors were unstained and unsoiled, though fingers had worn the paint off; dust was nowhere. On a little stand by the chimney corner lay a large Bible and another book, close beside stood a cushioned arm-chair. Some other apartment there probably was where wood and stores were kept; nothing was to be seen here that did not agree with a very comfortable face of the whole. It looked as if one might be happy there; it looked as if somebody *was* happy there; and a glance at the old lady of the house would not alter the opinion. Many a glance Ellen gave her as she sat talking with Alice; and with every one she felt more and more drawn towards her, and when the old lady's looks and words were at length turned to herself she blushed to think how long she had been looking steadily at a stranger.

"Little Miss Ellen, how do you like my house on the rock here?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Ellen; "I like it very much, only I don't think I should like it so well in winter."

"I am not certain that I don't like it then best of all. Why would you not like it in winter?"

"I shouldn't like the cold, ma'am, and to be alone."

"I like to be alone: but cold? I am in no danger of freezing, Miss Ellen. I make myself very warm—keep good fires—and my house is too strong for the wind to blow it away. Don't you want to

go out and see my cow? I have one of the best cows that ever you saw ; her name is Snow ; there is not a black hair upon her ; she is all white. Come, Miss Alice ; Mr. Marshman sent her to me a month ago ; she's a great treasure and worth looking at."

They went across the yard to the tiny barn or outhouse, where they found Snow nicely cared for. She was in a warm stable, a nice bedding of straw upon the floor, and plenty of hay laid up for her. Mrs. Vawse went to the door to look out.

"Naffy ought to be home to milk her," she said ; "I must give you supper and send you off. I've no feeling nor smell if snow isn't thick in the air somewhere ; we shall see it here soon."

"I'll milk her," said Alice.

"I'll milk her !" said Ellen : "I'll milk her ! Ah, do let me ; I know how to milk ; Mr. Van Brunt taught me, and I have done it several times. May I ? I should like it dearly."

"You shall do it surely, my child," said Mrs. Vawse. "Come with me, and I'll give you the pail and the milking-stool."

When Alice and Ellen came in with the milk they found the kettle on, the little table set, and Mrs. Vawse very busy at another table.

"What are you doing, Mrs. Vawse, may I ask?" said Alice.

"I'm just stirring up some Indian meal for you ; I find I have not but a crust left."

"Please to put that away, ma'am, for another time. Do you think I didn't know better than to come up to this mountain-top without bringing along something to live upon while I am here ? Here's a basket, ma'am, and in it are divers things ; I believe Margery and I between us have packed up enough for two or three suppers ; to say nothing of Miss Fortune's pie. There it is—sure to be good, you know ; and here are some of my cakes that you like so much, Mrs. Vawse," said Alice, as she went on pulling the things out of the basket ; "there is a bowl of butter—that's not wanted, I see—and here is a loaf of bread ; and that's all."

"Ah, I am glad to hear that kettle singing," said their hostess. "I can give you good tea, Miss Alice ; you'll think so, I know, for it's the same Mr. John sent me."

The supper was ready and the little party gathered round the table. Eating and talking went on with great spirit, their old friend seeming scarce less pleased or less lively than themselves. Alice proposed the French plan, and Mrs. Vawse entered into it very frankly ; it was easy to see that the style of building and of dress to which she had

been accustomed in early life were not the only things remembered kindly for old time's sake. It was settled they should meet as frequently as might be, either here or at the parsonage, and become good Frenchwomen with all convenient speed.

"Will you wish to walk so far to see me again, little Miss Ellen?"

"Oh yes, ma'am!"

"You won't fear the deep snow, and the wind and cold, and the steep hill?"

"Oh no, ma'am, I won't mind them a bit."

"I wish I could keep you all night," said Mrs. Vawse looking out, "but your father would be uneasy. I am afraid the storm will catch you before you get home; and you aren't fit to breast it. Little Ellen, too, don't look as if she was made of iron. Can't you stay with me?"

"I must not—it wouldn't do," said Alice, who was hastily putting on her things; "we'll soon run down the hill. But we are leaving you alone; where's Nancy?"

"She'll not come if there's a promise of a storm," said Mrs. Vawse; "she often stays out all night."

"And leaves you alone!"

"I am never alone," said the old lady quietly; "I have nothing to fear; but I am uneasy about you, dear. Mind my words; don't try to go back the way you came; take the other road; it's easier; and stop when you get to Mrs. Van Brunt's; Mr. Van Brunt will take you the rest of the way in his little wagon."

"Do you think it is needful?" said Alice, doubtfully.

"I am sure it is best. Hasten down. Adieu, *mon enfant*."

They kissed and embraced her and hurried out.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHOWING THAT IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES WHITE IS BLACK.

THE clouds hung thick and low; the wind was less than it had been. They took the path Mrs. Vawse had spoken of; it was broader and easier than the other, winding more gently down the mountain; it was sometimes, indeed, travelled by horses, though far too steep for any kind of carriage. Alice and Ellen ran along without giving much heed to anything but their footing, down, down, running and bound-

ing, hand in hand, till want of breath obliged them to slacken their pace.

"Do you think it will snow?—soon?" asked Ellen.

"I think it will snow, how soon I cannot tell. Have you had a pleasant afternoon?"

"Oh, very!"

"I always have when I go there. Now, Ellen, there is an example of contentment for you. If ever a woman loved husband and children and friends, Mrs. Vawse loved hers; I know this from those who knew her long ago; and now look at her. Of them all she has none left but the orphan daughter of her youngest son, and you know a little what sort of a child that is."

"She must be a very bad girl," said Ellen; "you can't think what stories she told me about her grandmother."

"Poor Nancy!" said Alice. "Mrs. Vawse has no money nor property of any kind, except what is in her house; but there is not a more independent woman breathing. She does all sorts of things to support herself. Now, for instance, Ellen, if anybody is sick within ten miles round, the family are too happy to get Mrs. Vawse for a nurse. She is an admirable one. Then she goes out tailoring at the farmers' houses; she brings home wool and returns it spun into yarn; she brings home yarn and knits it up into stockings and socks; all sorts of odd jobs. I have seen her picking hops; she isn't above doing anything, and yet she never forgets her own dignity. I think wherever she goes and whatever she is about, she is at all times one of the most ladylike persons I have ever seen. And everybody respects her; everybody likes to gain her good-will; she is known all over the country; and all the country are her friends."

"They pay her for doing these things, don't they?"

"Certainly; not often in money; more commonly in various kinds of matters that she wants—flour and sugar, and Indian meal, and pork, and ham, and vegetables, and wool—anything; it is but a little of each that she wants. She has friends that would not permit her to earn another sixpence if they could help it, but she likes better to live as she does. And she is always as you saw her to-day—cheerful and happy as a little girl."

Ellen was turning over Alice's last words and thinking that little girls were not *always* the cheerfulest and happiest creatures in the world, when Alice suddenly exclaimed, "It is snowing! Come, Ellen, we must make haste now!" and set off at a quickened pace.

Quick as they might, they had gone not a hundred yards when the whole air was filled with the falling flakes, and the wind which had lulled for a little now rose with greater violence and swept round the mountain furiously. The storm had come in good earnest and promised to be no trifling one. Alice and Ellen ran on, holding each other's hands and strengthening themselves against the blast, but their journey became every moment more difficult. The air was dark with the thick-falling snow; the wind seemed to blow in every direction by turns, but chiefly against them, blinding their eyes with the snow and making it necessary to use no small effort to keep on their way. Ellen hardly knew where she went, but allowed herself to be pulled along by Alice, or as well pulled *her* along; it was hard to say which hurried most. In the midst of this dashing on down the hill Alice all at once came to a sudden stop.

"Where's the Captain?" said she.

"I don't know," said Ellen; "I haven't thought of him since we left Mrs. Vawse's."

Alice turned her back to the wind and looked up the road they had come.

"I can't go on and leave him," she said; "he might perish in the storm." And she began to walk slowly back, calling at intervals, "Pussy!—kitty! pussy!"

"I hear him!" she said; "I hear him! poor kitty!"—and she set off at a quick pace up the hill. Ellen followed, but presently a burst of wind and snow brought them both to a stand. Alice faltered a little at this, in doubt whether to go up or down. But then to their great joy Captain's far-off cry was heard, and both Alice and Ellen strained their voices to cheer and direct him. In a few minutes he came in sight, trotting hurriedly along through the snow, and on reaching his mistress he sat down immediately on the ground without offering any caress; a sure sign that he was tired. Alice stooped down and took him up in her arms.

"Poor kitty!" she said, "you've done your part for to-day, I think; I'll do the rest. Ellen, dear, it's of no use to tire ourselves out at once; we will go moderately. Keep hold of my cloak, my child; it takes both of my arms to hold this big cat. Now, never mind the snow; we can bear being blown about a little; are you very tired?"

"No," said Ellen, "not very; I am a little tired; but I don't care for that if we can only get home safe."

"There's no difficulty about that I hope. Nay, there may be some

difficulty, but we shall get there, I think, in good safety after a while. Mrs. Van Brunt's isn't very far off; we shall feel the wind less when we turn."

But the road seemed long. The storm did not increase in violence, truly; but the looked-for turning was not soon found, and the gathering darkness warned them day was drawing towards a close. As they neared the bottom of the hill Alice made a pause.

"There's a path that turns off from this and makes a shorter cut to Mrs. Van Brunt's, but it must be above here; I must have missed it, though I have been on the watch constantly."

"Shall we go back and look for the path?" said Ellen.

"I am afraid we shouldn't find it if we did," said Alice; "we should only lose our time, and we have none to lose. I think we had better go straight forward."

"Is it much farther this way than the other path we have missed?"

"A good deal--all of half a mile. I am sorry; but courage, my child! we shall know better than to go out in snowy weather next time--on long expeditions at least."

They had to shout to make each other hear, so drove the snow and wind through the trees and into their very faces and ears. They plodded on. The snow lay thick enough now to make their footing uneasy, and grew deeper every moment; their shoes were full; their feet and ankles were wet; and their steps began to drag heavily over the ground. Ellen clung as close to Alice's cloak as their hurried travelling would permit; sometimes one of Alice's hands was loosened for a moment to be passed round Ellen's shoulders, and a word of courage or comfort in the clear calm tone cheered her to renewed exertion.

The path at length brought them to the long-desired turning; but it was by this time so dark that the fences on each side of the road showed but dimly. They had not spoken for a while; as they turned the corner a sigh of mingled weariness and satisfaction escaped from Ellen's lips. It reached Alice's ear.

"What's the matter, love?" said the sweet voice. No trace of weariness was allowed to come into it.

"I am so glad we have got here at last," said Ellen, looking up with another sigh, and removing her hand for an instant from its grasp on the cloak to Alice's arm.

"My poor child! Can you hold on a little longer?"

"Oh yes, dear Miss Alice; I can hold on."

But Ellen's voice, was not so well guarded. "It was like her steps, a little unsteady. She presently spoke again.

"Miss Alice—are you afraid?"

"I am afraid of your getting sick, my child, and a little afraid of it for myself;— of nothing else. What is there to be afraid of?"

"It is very dark," said Ellen; "and the storm is so thick—do you think you can find the way?"

"I know it perfectly; it is nothing but to keep straight on; and the fences would prevent us from getting out of the road. It is hard walking I know, but we shall get there by-and-by; bear up as well as you can, dear. I am sorry I can give you no help but words. Don't you think a nice bright fire will look comfortable after all this?"

"Oh dear, yes!" answered Ellen, rather sadly.

"Are *you* afraid, Ellen?"

"No, Miss Alice—not much. I don't like it's being so-dark, I can't see where I am going."

"The darkness makes our way longer and more tedious; it will do us no other harm, love. The darkness and the light are both alike to our Father; we are in His hands; we are safe enough, dear Ellen."

Ellen's hand left the cloak again for an instant to press Alice's arm in answer; her voice failed at the minute. Then clinging anew as close to her side as she could get, they toiled patiently on. The wind had somewhat lessened its violence, and besides it blew not now in their faces, but against their backs, helping them on. Still the snow continued to fall very fast, and already lay thick upon the ground; every half hour increased the heaviness and painfulness of their march; and darkness gathered till the very fences could no longer be seen. It was pitch dark; to hold the middle of the road was impossible; their only way was to keep along by one of the fences; and for fear of hurting themselves against some outstanding post or stone it was necessary to travel quite gently. They were indeed in no condition to travel otherwise if light had not been wanting. Slowly and patiently, with painful care groping their way, they pushed on through the snow and the thick night. Alice could feel the earnestness of Ellen's grasp upon her clothes; and her close pressing up to her made their progress still slower and more difficult than it would otherwise have been.

"Miss Alice," said Ellen

"What, my child?"

I wish you would speak to me once in a while."

"I have been so busy picking my way along, I have neglected you, haven't I?"

"Oh no, ma'am. But I like to hear the sound of your voice sometimes, it makes me feel better."

"This is an odd kind of travelling, isn't it?" said Alice, cheerfully; "in the dark, and feeling our way along? This will be quite an adventure to talk about, won't it?"

"Quite," said Ellen.

"It is easier going this way, don't you find it so? The wind helps us forward."

"It helps me too much," said Ellen; "I wish it wouldn't be quite so very kind. Why, Miss Alice, I have enough to do to hold myself together sometimes. It almost makes me run, though I am so very tired. How long do you think it will be before we get to Mrs. Van Brunt's?"

"My dear child, I cannot tell you. I have not the least notion whereabouts we are. I can see no waymarks, and I cannot judge at all of the rate at which we have come."

"But what if we should have passed it in this darkness?" said Ellen.

"No, I don't think that," said Alice, though a cold doubt struck her mind at Ellen's words; "I think we shall see the glimmer of Mrs. Van Brunt's family candle by-and-by."

But more uneasily and more keenly now she strove to see that glimmer through the darkness. She began to question anxiously with herself which side of the house was Mrs. Van Brunt's ordinary sitting-room—whether she should see the light from it before or after passing the house; and now her glance was directed often behind her, that they might be sure in any case of not missing their desired haven. In vain she looked forward or back; it was all one; no cheering glimmer of lamp or candle greeted her straining eyes. Hurriedly now from time to time the comforting words were spoken to Ellen, for to pursue the long stretch of way that led onward from Mr. Van Brunt's to Miss Fortune's would be a very serious matter; Alice wanted comfort herself.

"Shall we get there soon, do you think, Miss Alice?" said poor Ellen, whose wearied feet carried her painfully over the deepening snow. The tone of voice went to Alice's heart.

"I don't know, my darling; I hope so," she answered; but it was spoken rather patiently than cheerfully. "Fear nothing, dear Ellen;

remember Who has the care of us; darkness and light are both alike to Him! nothing will do us any real harm."

"There's a light!" exclaimed Ellen, "but it isn't a candle, it is moving about; what is it? what is it, Miss Alice?"

They stopped and looked. A light there certainly was, dimly seen moving at some little distance from the fence on the opposite side of the road. All of a sudden it disappeared.

"What is it?" whispered Ellen, fearfully.

"I don't know, my love, yet; wait —"

They waited several minutes.

"What could it be?" said Ellen. "It was certainly a light; I saw it as plainly as ever I saw anything; what can it have done with itself?—there it is again! going the other way!"

Alice waited no longer, but screamed out, "Who's there?"

But the light paid no attention to her cry: it travelled on.

"Halloo!" called Alice again, as loud as she could.

"Halloo!" answered a rough, deep voice. The light suddenly stopped.

"That's he! that's he!" exclaimed Ellen, in an ecstasy, and almost dancing. "I know it; it's Mr. Van Brunt! it's Mr. Van Brunt! Oh, Miss Alice! —"

Struggling between crying and laughing, Ellen could not stand it, but gave way to a good fit of crying. Alice felt the infection, but controlled herself, though her eyes watered as her heart sent up its grateful tribute; as well as she could, she answered the halloo.

The light was seen advancing towards them. Presently it glimmered faintly behind the fence, showing a bit of the dark rails covered with snow, and they could dimly see the figure of a man getting over them. He crossed the road to where they stood. It was Mr. Van Brunt.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Van Brunt," said Alice's sweet voice; but it trembled a little.

That gentleman, at first dumb with astonishment, lifted his lantern to survey them, and assure his eyes that his ears had not been mistaken.

"Miss Alice! — My goodness alive! — How in the name of wonder! — And my poor little lamb? — But what on 'arth, ma'am! you must be half dead. Come this way; just come back a little bit; why, where were you going, ma'am?"

"To your house, Mr. Van Brunt; I have been looking for it with no little anxiety, I assure you."

"Looking for it! Why, how on 'arth! you wouldn't see the biggest house ever was built half a yard off such a plaguy night as this."

"I thought I should see the light from the windows, Mr. Van Brunt."

"The light from the windows! Bless my soul! the storm rattled so again the windows that mother made me pull the great shutters to. I won't have 'em shut again of a stormy night, that's a fact; you'd ha' gone far enough afore you'd ha' seen the light through them shutters."

"Then we had passed the house already, hadn't we?"

"Indeed you had, ma'am. I guess you saw my light, ha'n't you?"

"Yes, and glad enough we were to see it, too."

"I suppose so. It happened so to-night; now that is a queer thing; I minded that I hadn't untied my horse. He's a trick of being untied at night, and won't sleep well if he ain't; and mother wanted me to let him alone 'cause of the awful storm, but I couldn't go to my bed in peace till I had seen him to his'n. So that's how my lantern came to be going to the barn in such an awkward night as this."

They had reached the little gate, and Mr. Van Brunt with some difficulty pulled it open. A few steps further and they came to the door. As the faint light of the lantern was thrown upon the old latch and door-posts, Ellen felt at home, and a sense of comfort sank down into her heart which she had not known for some time.

CHAPTER XX.

HEADSICK AND HEARTSICK.

MR. VAN BRUNT flung open the door, and the two wet and weary travellers stepped after him into the same cheerful, comfortable-looking kitchen that had received Ellen once before. It seemed to Ellen a perfect storehouse of comfort; the very walls had a kind face for her. There were no other faces, however; the chairs were all empty. Mr. Van Brunt put Alice in one, and Ellen in another, and shouted, "Mother! here!" muttering that she had taken herself off with the light somewhere. Not very far; for in half a minute, answering the call, Mrs. Van Brunt and the light came hurriedly in.

"What's the matter, 'Brahm? who's this? why, 'tain't Miss Alice! My gracious me! and all wet! oh dear, dear, poor lamb! Why,

Miss Alice, dear, where have you been!—and if that ain't my little Ellen! oh dear! what a fix you are in; well, darling, I'm glad to see you again a'most any way."

She crossed over to kiss Ellen as she said this; but surprise was not more quickly alive than kindness and hospitality. She fell to work immediately to remove Alice's wet things, and to do whatever their joint prudence and experience might suggest to ward off any ill effects from the fatigue and exposure the wanderers had suffered; and while she was thus employed, Mr. Van Brunt busied himself with Ellen, who was really in no condition to help herself. It was curious to see him carefully taking off Ellen's wet hood (not the blue one), and knocking it gently to get rid of the snow; evidently thinking that ladies' things must have delicate handling. He tried the cloak next, but boggled sadly at the fastening of that, and at last was fain to call in help.

"Here, Nancy! where are you? step here, and see if you can undo this here thing, whatever you call it; I believe my fingers are too big for it."

It was Ellen's former acquaintance who came forward in obedience to this call. Ellen had not seen before that she was in the room. Nancy grinned a mischievous smile of recognition, as she stooped to Ellen's throat, and undid the fastening of the cloak, and then shortly enough bade her "get up, that she might take it off." Ellen obeyed, but was very glad to sit down again. While Nancy went to the door to shake the cloak, Mr. Van Brunt was gently pulling off Ellen's wet gloves, and on Nancy's return, he directed her to take off the shoes, which were filled with snow. Nancy sat down on the floor before Ellen to obey this order; and tired and exhausted as she was, Ellen felt the different manner in which her hands and feet were waited upon.

"How did you get into this scrape?" said Nancy; "*this* was none of my doings anyhow. It'll never be dry weather, Ellen, where you are. I won't put on my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes when I go a-walking with you. You had ought to ha' been a duck or a goose, or something like that. What's that for, Mr. Van Brunt?"

This last query, pretty sharply spoken, was in answer to a light touch of that gentleman's hand upon Miss Nancy's ear, which came rather as a surprise. He deigned no reply.

"You're a fine gentleman!" said Nancy, tartly.

"Have you done what I gave you to do?" said Mr. Van Brunt, coolly.

"Yes--there!" said Nancy, holding up Ellen's bare feet on one hand, while the fingers of the other, secretly applied in ticklish fashion to the soles of them, caused Ellen suddenly to start and scream.

"Get up!" said Mr. Van Brunt; Nancy didn't think best to disobey. "Mother, ha'n't you got nothing you want Nancy to do?"

"Sally," said Mrs. Van Brunt, "you and Nancy go and fetch here a couple of pails of hot water, - right away."

"Go, and mind what you are about," said Mr. Van Brunt, "and after that keep out of this room, and don't whisper again till I give you leave. Now, Miss Ellen dear, how do you feel?"

Ellen said in words that she felt "nicely." But the eyes and the smile said a great deal more; Ellen's heart was running over.

"Oh, she'll feel nicely, I'll be bound," said Mrs. Van Brunt; "wait till she gets her feet soaked, and then!—"

"I do feel nicely now," said Ellen. And Alice smiled in answer to their enquiries, and said if she only knew her father was easy there would be nothing wanting to her happiness.

The bathing of their feet was a great refreshment, and their kind hostess had got ready a plentiful supply of hot herb tea, with which both Alice and Ellen were well dosed. While they sat sipping this, toasting their feet before the fire, Mrs. Van Brunt and the girls meanwhile preparing their room, Mr. Van Brunt suddenly entered. He was cloaked and hatted, and had a riding-whip in his hand.

"Is there any word you'd like to get home, Miss Alice? I'm going to ride a good piece that way, and I can stop as good as not."

"To-night, Mr. Van Brunt!" exclaimed Alice in astonishment.

Mr. Van Brunt's silence seemed to say that to-night was the time and no other.

"But the storm is too bad," urged Alice. "Pray don't go till to-morrow."

"Pray don't, Mr. Van Brunt!" said Ellen.

"Can't help it—I've got business; must go. What shall I say, ma'am?"

"I should be *very* glad," said Alice, "to have my father know where I am. Are you going very near the Nose?"

"Very near."

"Then I shall be greatly obliged if you will be so kind as to stop and relieve my father's anxiety. But how can you go in such weather? and so dark as it is."

"Never fear," said Mr. Van Brunt. "We'll be back in half an hour,

if 'Brahm and me don't come across a snow-drift a *little* too deep. Good-night, ma'am." And out he went.

"Back in half an hour," said Alice, musing. "Why, he said he had been to untie his horse for the night? He must be going on our account, I am sure, Ellen."

"On *your* account," said Ellen, smiling. "Oh, I knew that all the time, Miss Alice. I don't think he'll stop to relieve Aunt Fortune's anxiety."

Alice sprang to call him back, but Mrs. Van Brunt assured her it was too late, and that she need not be uneasy, for her son "didn't mind the storm no more than a weather-board." 'Brahm and 'Brahm could go anywhere in any sort of a time. "He was agoing without speaking to you, but I told him he had better, for maybe you wanted to send some word particular. And your room's ready now, dear, and you'd better go to bed and sleep as long as you can."

They went thankfully. "Isn't this a pleasant room?" said Ellen, who saw everything in rose-colour; "and a nice bed? But I feel as if I could sleep on the floor to-night. Isn't it a'most worth while to have such a time, Miss Alice, for the sake of the pleasure afterwards?"

"I don't know, Ellen," said Alice, smiling; "I won't say that; though it *is* worth paying a price for to find how much kindness there is in some people's hearts. As to sleeping on the floor, I must say I never felt less inclined to it."

"Well, I am tired enough too," said Ellen, as they laid themselves down. "Two nights with you in a week! Oh, those weeks before I saw you, Miss Alice!"

One earnest kiss for good-night; and Ellen's sigh of pleasure on touching the pillow was scarcely breathed when sleep deep and sound fell upon her eyelids.

It was very late next morning when they awoke, having slept rather heavily than well. They crawled out of bed feeling stiff and sore in every limb; each confessing to more evil effects from their adventure than she had been aware of the evening before. All the rubbing and bathing and drinking that Mrs. Van Brunt had administered had been too little to undo what wet and cold and fatigue had done. But Mrs. Van Brunt had set her breakfast-table with everything her house could furnish that was nice; a bountifully-spread board it was. Mr. Humphreys was there too; and no bad feelings of two of the party could prevent that from being a most cheerful and pleasant meal.

Even Mr. Humphreys and Mr. Van Brunt, two persons not usually given to many words, came out wonderfully on this occasion ; gratitude and pleasure in the one, and generous feeling on the part of the other, untied their tongues ; and Ellen looked from one to the other in some amazement to see how agreeable they could be. Kindness and hospitality always kept Mrs. Van Brunt in full flow ; and Alice, whatever she felt, exerted herself, and supplied what was wanting everywhere ; like the transparent glazing which painters use to spread over the dead colour of their pictures ; unknown, it was she gave life and harmony to the whole. And Ellen in her enjoyment of everything and everybody forgot or despised aches and pains, and even whispered to Alice that coffee was making her well again.

But happy breakfasts must come to an end, and so did this, prolonged though it was. Immediately after, the party whom circumstances had gathered for the first and probably the last time, scattered again ; but the meeting had left pleasant effects on all minds.

Mr. Humphreys had brought the little one-horse sleigh for his daughter, and soon after breakfast Ellen saw it drive off with her. Mr. Van Brunt then harnessed his own and carried Ellen home. Ill though she felt, the poor child made an effort and spent part of the morning in finishing the long letter to her mother which had been on the stocks since Monday. The effort became painful towards the last ; and the aching limbs and trembling hand of which she complained were the first beginnings of a serious fit of illness. She went to bed that same afternoon, and did not leave it again for two weeks. Cold had taken violent hold of her system ; fever set in and ran high ; and half the time little Ellen's wits were roving in delirium. Nothing, however, could be too much for Miss Fortune's energies ; she was as much at home in a sick room as in a well one. She flew about with increased agility ; was upstairs and downstairs twenty times in the course of the day, and kept all straight everywhere. Ellen's room was always the picture of neatness ; the fire, the wood-fire, was taken care of ; Miss Fortune seemed to know by instinct when it wanted a fresh supply, and to be on the spot by magic to give it. Ellen's medicines were dealt out in proper time ; her gruels and drinks perfectly well made and arranged with appetising nicety on a little table by the bedside where she could reach them herself ; and Miss Fortune was generally at hand when she was wanted. But in spite of all this there was something missing in that sick room,—there was a great want ; and whenever the delirium was upon her Ellen made no

secret of it. She was never violent ; but she moaned, sometimes impatiently, and sometimes plaintively, for her mother. It was a vexation to Miss Fortune to hear her. The name of her mother was all the time on her lips ; if by chance her aunt's name came in, it was spoken in a way that generally sent her bouncing out of the room.

"Mamma," poor Ellen would say, "just lay your hand on my forehead, will you? 't's so hot. Oh do, mamma!—where are you? Do put your hand on my forehead, won't you?—Oh, do speak to me, why don't you, mamma? Oh, why don't she come to me?"

Once when Ellen was uncasily calling in this fashion for her mother's hand, Miss Fortune softly laid her own upon the child's brow ; but the quick sudden jerk of the head from under it told her how well Ellen knew the one from the other ; and little as she cared for Ellen it was wormwood to her.

Miss Fortune was not without offers of help during this sick time. Mrs. Van Brunt, and afterwards Mrs. Vawse, asked leave to come and nurse Ellen ; but Miss Fortune declared it was more plague than profit to her, and she couldn't be bothered with having strangers about. Mrs. Van Brunt she suffered much against her will to come for a day or two ; at the end of that Miss Fortune found means to get rid of her civilly. Mrs. Vawse she would not allow to stay an hour. The old lady got leave, however, to go up to the sick room for a few minutes. Ellen, who was then in a high fever, informed her that her mother was downstairs, and her Aunt Fortune would not let her come up ; she pleaded with tears that she might come, and entreated Mrs. Vawse to take her aunt away and send her mother. Mrs. Vawse tried to soothe her. Miss Fortune grew impatient.

"What on earth's the use," said she, "of talking to a child that's out of her head? She can't hear reason ; that's the way she gets into whenever the fever's on her. I have the pleasure of hearing that sort of thing all the time. Come away, Mrs. Vawse, and leave her, she can't be better any way than alone, and I am in the room every other thing ; she's just as well quiet. Nobody knows," said Miss Fortune, on her way downstairs, "nobody knows the blessing of taking care of other people's children that ha'n't tried it. *I've* tried it, to my heart's content."

Mrs. Vawse sighed, but departed in silence.

It was not when the fever was on her and delirium high that Ellen most felt the want she then so pitifully made known. There were other times, when her head was aching, and weary and weak she lay

still there, oh, how she longed then for the dear wonted face; the old quiet smile that carried so much of comfort and assurance with it; the voice that was like heaven's music; the touch of that loved hand to which she had clung for so many years! Many and many were the silent tears that rolled down and wet her pillow; many a long-drawn sigh came from the very bottom of Ellen's heart. She wondered sadly why Alice did not come to see her; it was another great grief added to the former. She never chose, however, to mention her name to her aunt. She kept her wonder and her sorrow to herself—all the harder to bear for that. After two weeks Ellen began to mend, and then she became exceeding weary of being alone and shut up to her room. It was a pleasure to have her Bible and hymn-book lying upon the bed, and a great comfort when she was able to look at a few words; but that was not very often, and she longed to see somebody and hear something besides her aunt's dry questions and answers.

One afternoon Ellen was sitting, alone as usual, bolstered up in bed. Her little hymn-book was clasped in her hand; though not equal to reading, she felt the touch of it a solace. Half dozing, half waking, she had been perfectly quiet for some time, when the sudden and not very gentle opening of the room door caused her to start and open her eyes. They opened wider than usual, for instead of her Aunt Fortune it was the figure of Miss Nancy Vawse that presented itself. She came in briskly, and shutting the door behind her advanced to the bedside.

"Well," said she, "there you are! Why, you look smart enough. I've come to see you. Miss Fortune's gone out, and she told me to come and take care of you; so I'm going to spend the afternoon."

There was a mischievous twinkle in Nancy's eyes. Ellen for once in her life wished for her aunt's presence.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Ellen.

"Nothing, indeed! It's a fine thing to lie there and do nothing. You won't get well in a hurry, I guess, will you? You look as well as I do this minute. Oh, I always knew you was a sham."

"You are very much mistaken," said Ellen, indignantly; "I have been very sick, and I am not at all well yet."

"Fiddle-de-dee! it's very nice to think so. Come, Ellen, try getting up a little. I believe you hurt yourself with sleeping. It'll do you good to be out of bed awhile; come! get up."

She pulled Ellen's arm as she spoke.

"Stop, Nancy, let me alone!" cried Ellen, struggling with all her force; "I mustn't get up; what do you mean? I'm not able to sit up at all; let me go!"

She succeeded in freeing herself from Nancy's grasp.

"Well, you're an obstinate piece," said the other; "have your own way. But mind, I'm left in charge of you; is it time for you to take your physic?"

"I am not taking any," said Ellen.

"What are you taking?"

"Nothing but gruel and little things."

"Gruel and little things." Well, it is time for you to take some gruel or one of the little things?"

"No, I don't want any."

"Oh, that's nothing; people never know what's good for them; I'm your nurse now, and I'm going to give it to you when I think you want it. Let me feel your pulse—yes, your pulse says gruel is wanting. I shall put some down to warm right away."

"I sha'n't take it," said Ellen.

"That's a likely story! You'd better not say so. Look here, Ellen, you'd better mind how you behave; you're going to do just what I tell you. I know how to manage you; if you make any fuss I shall just tickle you finely," said Nancy, as she prepared a bed of coals, and set the cup of gruel on it to get hot.

Poor Ellen involuntarily curled up her feet under the bed-clothes, so as to get them as far as possible out of harm's way. She judged the best thing was to keep quiet if she could; so she said nothing. Nancy was in great glee; with something of the same spirit of mischief that a cat shows when she has a captured mouse at the end of her paws. While the gruel was heating she spun round the room in quest of amusement; and her sudden jerks and flings from one place and thing to another had so much of lawlessness that Ellen was in perpetual terror as to what she might take it into her head to do next.

"Where does that door lead to?"

"I believe that one leads to the garret," said Ellen.

"You *believe* so? why don't you say it does, at once?"

"I haven't been up to see."

"You haven't! you expect me to believe that I s'pose? I am not quite such a gull as you take me for. What's up there?"

"I don't know, of course."

"Of course? I declare I don't know what you're up to *exactly*; but if you won't tell me I'll find out for myself pretty quick."

She flung open the door and ran up ; and Ellen heard her feet trampling overhead from one end of the house to the other ; and sounds too of pushing and pulling things over the floor ; it was plain Nancy was fummaging.

"Well," said Ellen, as she turned uneasily upon her bed, "it's no affair of mine ; I can't help it, whatever she does. But oh, won't Aunt Fortune be angry !"

Nancy presently came down with her frock gathered up into a bag before her.

"What do you think I have got here?" said she. "I s'pose you didn't know there was a basket of fine hickory nuts up there in the corner? Was it you or Miss Fortune that hid them away so nicely? I s'pose she thought nobody would ever think of looking behind the great blue chest and under the feather bed, but it takes me ! Miss Fortune was afraid of your stealing 'em, I guess, Ellen."

"She needn't have been," said Ellen, indignantly.

"No, I s'pose you wouldn't take 'em if you saw 'em ; you wouldn't eat 'em if they were cracked for you, would you?"

She flung some on Ellen's bed as she spoke. Nancy had seated herself on the floor, and using for a hammer a piece of old iron she had brought down with her from the garret, she was cracking the nuts on the clean white hearth.

"Indeed I wouldn't," said Ellen, throwing them back ; "and you oughtn't to crack them there, Nancy."

"What do you think I care?" said the other, scornfully. She leisurely cracked and eat as many as she pleased of the nuts, bestowing the rest in the bosom of her frock. Ellen watched fearfully for her next move. If she should open the little door and get among her books and boxes !

Nancy's first care, however, was the cup of gruel. It was found too hot for any mortal lips to bear, so it was set on one side to cool. Then taking up her rambling examination of the room, she went from window to window.

"What fine big windows ! one might get in here easy enough. I declare, Ellen, some night I'll set the ladder up against here, and the first thing you'll see will be me coming in. You'll have me to sleep with you before you think."

"I'll fasten my windows," said Ellen.

"No, you won't. You'll do it a night or two, may be, but then you'll forget it. I shall find them open when I come. Oh, I'll come !"

"But I could call Aunt Fortune," said Ellen.

"No, you couldn't, 'cause if you spoke a word I'd tickle you to death; that's what I'd do. I know how to fix you off. And if you did call her I'll just whap out of the window and run off with my ladder, and then you'd get a fine combing for disturbing the house. What's in this trunk?"

"Only my clothes and things," said Ellen.

"Oh goody! that's fine; now I'll have a look at 'em. That's just what I wanted, only I didn't know it. Where's the key? Oh, here it is, sticking in,—that's good."

"Oh, please don't!" said Ellen, raising herself on her elbows, "they're all in nice order, and you'll get them all in confusion. Oh, do let them alone!"

"You'd best be quiet, or I'll come and see you," said Nancy; "I'm just going to look at everything in it, and if I find anything out of sorts, you'll get it. What's this? ruffles, I declare! ain't you fine! I'll see how they look on me. What a plague! you haven't a glass in the room. Never mind,—I am used to dressing without a glass."

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't," said Ellen, who was worried to the last degree at seeing her nicely done-up ruffles round Nancy's neck.

"Don't cry about it," said Nancy, coolly, "I ain't agoing to eat 'm. My goodness! what a fine hood! ain't that pretty?"

The nice blue hood was turned about in Nancy's fingers, and well-looked at inside and out. Ellen was in distress for fear it would go on Nancy's head as well as the ruffles round her neck; but it didn't; she flung it at length on one side, and went on pulling out one thing after another, strewing them very carelessly about the floor.

"What's here? a pair of dirty stockings, as I am alive. Ain't you ashamed to put dirty stockings in your trunk?"

"They are no such thing," said Ellen, who in her vexation was in danger of forgetting her fear,— "I've worn them but once."

"They've no business in here, any how," said Nancy, rolling them up in a hard ball and giving them a sudden fling at Ellen. They just missed her face and struck the wall beyond. Ellen seized them to throw back, but her weakness warned her she was not able and a moment reminded her of the folly of doing anything to rouse Nancy, who for the present was pretty quiet. Ellen lay upon her pillow and looked on, ready to cry with vexation. All her nicely stowed piles of white clothes were ruthlessly hurled out and tumbled about; her capes tried on; her summer dresses unfolded, displayed, criticised.

The floor was littered with clothes in various states of disarrangement and confusion. The bottom of the trunk was reached at last, and then Nancy suddenly recollected her gruel and sprang to it. But it had grown cold again.

"This won't do," said Nancy, as she put it on the coals again,— "it must be just right; it'll warm soon, and then, Miss Ellen, you're agoing to take it, whether or no. I hope you won't give me the pleasure of pouring it down."

Meanwhile she opened the little door of Ellen's study closet and went in there, though Ellen begged her not. She pulled the door to, and stayed some time perfectly quiet. Not able to see or hear what she was doing, and fretted beyond measure that her work-box and writing-desk should be at Nancy's mercy, or even feel the touch of her fingers, Ellen at last could stand it no longer but threw herself out of the bed, weak as she was, and went to see what was going on. Nancy was seated quietly on the floor, examining with much seeming interest the contents of the work-box; trying on the thimble, cutting bits of thread with the scissors, and marking the ends of the spools; with whatever like pieces of mischief her restless spirit could devise; but when Ellen opened the door she put the box from her and started up.

"My goodness me!" said she, "this'll never do. What are you out here for? you'll catch your death with those dear little bare feet, and we shall have the mischief to pay."

As she said this she caught up Ellen in her arms as if she had been a baby, and carried her back to the bed, where she laid her with two or three little shakes, and then proceeded to spread up the clothes and tuck her in all round. She then ran for the gruel. Ellen was in great question whether to give way to tears or vexation; but with some difficulty determined upon vexation as the best plan. Nancy prepared the gruel to her liking, and brought it to the bedside; but to get it swallowed was another matter. Nancy was resolved Ellen should take it. Ellen had less strength but quite as much obstinacy as her enemy, and she was equally resolved not to drink a drop. Between laughing on Nancy's part, and very serious anger on Ellen's, a struggle ensued. Nancy tried to force it down, but Ellen's shut teeth were as firm as a vice, and the end was that two-thirds were bestowed on the sheet. Ellen burst into tears. Nancy laughed.

"Well, I *do* think," said she, "you are one of the hardest customers ever I came across. I shouldn't want to have the managing of you

when you get a little bigger. Oh, the way Miss Fortune will look when she comes in here will be a caution! Oh, what fun!"

Nancy shouted and clapped her hands. "Come, stop crying!" said she, "what a baby you are! what are you crying for? come stop! I'll make you laugh if you don't."

Two or three little applications of Nancy's fingers made her words good, but laughing was mixed with crying, and Ellen writhed in hysterics. Just then came a little knock at the door. Ellen did not hear it, but it quieted Nancy. She stood still a moment; and then as the knock was repeated she called out boldly, "Come in!" Ellen raised her head "to see who there might be;" and great was the surprise of both and the joy of one as the tall form and broad shoulders of Mr. Van Brunt presented themselves.

"Oh, Mr. Van Brunt," sobbed Ellen, "I am so glad to see you! won't you please send Nancy away?"

"What are you doing here?" said the astonished Dutchman.

"Look and see, Mr. Van Brunt," said Nancy, with a smile of mischief's own curling; "you won't be long finding out, I guess."

"Take yourself off, and don't let me hear of your being caught here again."

"I'll go when I'm ready, thank you," said Nancy; "and as to the rest, I haven't been caught the first time yet; I don't know what you mean."

She sprang as she finished her sentence, for Mr. Van Brunt made a sudden movement to catch her then and there. He was foiled; and then began a running chase round the room, in the course of which Nancy dodged, pushed, and sprang, with the power of squeezing by impassables and overleaping impossibilities, that to say the least of it was remarkable. The room was too small for her, and she was caught at last.

"I vow!" said Mr. Van Brunt, as he pinioned her hands, "I should like to see you play blind-man's-buff for once, if I weren't the blind man."

"How'd you see me if you was?" said Nancy, scornfully.

"Now, Miss Ellen," said Mr. Van Brunt, as he brought her to Ellen's bedside, "here she is, safe; what shall I do with her?"

"If you will only send her away, and not let her come back, Mr. Van Brunt!" said Ellen, "I'll be so much obliged to you!"

"Let me go!" said Nancy. "I declare you are a real mean Dutchman, Mr. Van Brunt."

He took both her hands in one, and laid the other lightly over her ears.

"I'll let you go," said he. "Now, don't you be caught here again if you know what is good for yourself."

He saw Miss Nancy out of the door, and then came back to Ellen, who was crying heartily again from nervous vexation.

"She's gone," said he. "What has that wicked thing been doing, Miss Ellen? what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen, "you can't think how she has worried me; she has been here this great while, just look at all my things on the floor, and that isn't the half."

Mr. Van Brunt gave a long whistle as his eye surveyed the tokens of Miss Nancy's mischief-making, over and through which both she and himself had been chasing at full speed, making the state of matters rather worse than it was before.

"I do say," said he, slowly, "that is too bad. I'd fix them up again for you, Miss Ellen, if I knew how; but my hands are almost as clumsy as my feet, and I see the marks of them there; it's too bad, I declare; I didn't know what I was going on."

"Never mind, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen; "I don't mind what you have done a bit. I'm so glad to see you!"

She put out her little hand to him as she spoke. He took it in his own silently, but though he said and showed nothing of it, Ellen's look and tone of affection thrilled his heart with pleasure.

"How do you do?" said he, kindly. • •

"I am a great deal better," said Ellen. "Sit down, won't you, Mr. Van Brunt! I want to see you a little."

Horses wouldn't have drawn him away after that. He sat down.

"Ain't you going to be up again some of these days?" said he.

"Oh, yes, I hope so," said Ellen, sighing; "I am very tired of lying here."

He looked round the room; got up and mended the fire; then came and sat down again.

"I was up yesterday for a minute," said Ellen, "but the chair tired me so, I was glad to get back to bed again."

It was no wonder; harder and straighter-backed chairs never were invented. Probably Mr. Van Brunt thought so.

"Wouldn't you like to have a rocking-cheer?" said he suddenly, as if a bright thought had struck him.

"Oh, yes, how much I should!" said Ellen, with another long-

drawn breath ; “but there isn’t such a thing in the house that ever I saw.”

“Aye, but there is in other houses, though,” said Mr. Van Brunt, with as near an approach to a smile as his lips commonly made ; “we’ll see !”

Ellen smiled more broadly. “But don’t you give yourself any trouble for me,” said she.

“Trouble, indeed !” said Mr. Van Brunt ; “I don’t know anything about that.”

The colour which excitement brought into Ellen’s face had faded away, and she had settled herself back against her pillow with an expression of weakness and weariness that the strong man saw and felt.

“What is there I can do for you ?” said he, with a gentleness that seemed almost strange from such lips.

“If you would,” said Ellen, faintly, “if you *could* be so kind as to read me a hymn, I should be so glad. I’ve had nobody to read to me.”

Her hand put the little book towards him as she said so.

Mr. Van Brunt would vastly rather anyone had asked him to plough an acre. He was to the full as much confounded as poor Ellen had once been at a request of his. He hesitated, and looked towards Ellen, wishing for an excuse. But the pale little face that lay there against the pillow, the drooping eyelids, the meek, helpless look of the little child, put all excuses out of his head ; and though he would have chosen to do almost anything else, he took the book, and asked her “Where ?” She said anywhere ; and he took the first he saw.

“Poor, weak, and worthless, though I am,
I have a rich almighty friend ;
Jesus the Saviour is His name,
He freely loves, and without end.”

“Oh,” said Ellen, with a sigh of pleasure, and folding her hands on her breast,—“how lovely that is !”

He stopped, and looked at her a moment, and then went on with increased gravity.

“He ransomed me from hell with blood,
And by His pow’r my foes controlled ;
He found me wand’ring far from God,
And brought me to his chosen fold.”

“Fold !” said Ellen, opening her eyes ; “what is that i

"It's where sheep are penned, ain't it?" said Mr. Van Brunt, after a pause.

"Oh, yes," said Ellen, "that's it; I remember; that's like what he said, 'I am the good shepherd,' and 'the Lord is my shepherd;' I know now. Go on, please."

He finished the hymn without more interruption. Looking again towards Ellen, he was surprised to see several large tears finding their way down her cheeks from under the wet eyelashes. But she quickly wiped them away.

"What do you read them things for," said he, "if they make you feel bad?"

"Feel bad!" said Ellen. "Oh, they don't; they make me happy; I love them dearly. I never read that one before. You can't think how much I am obliged to you for reading it to me. Will you let me see where it is?"

He gave it her.

"Yes, there's his mark!" said Ellen, with sparkling eyes. "Now, Mr. Van Brunt, would you be so very good as to read it once more?"

He obeyed. It was easier this time. She listened as before with closed eyes, but the colour came and went once or twice.

"Thank you very much," she said, when he had done. "Are you going?"

"I must; I have some things to look after."

She held his hand still.

"Mr. Van Brunt, don't *you* love hymns?"

"I don't know much about 'em, Miss Ellen."

"Mr. Van Brunt, are you one of that fold?"

"What fold?"

"The fold of Christ's people."

"I'm afeard not, Miss Ellen," said he soberly, after a minute's pause.

"Because," said Ellen, bursting into tears, "I wish you were very much."

She carried the great brown hand to her lips before she let it go. He went without saying a word. But when he got out, he stopped and looked at a little tear she had left on the back of it. And he looked till one of his own fell there to keep it company.

CHAPTER XXI.

FOOTSTEPS OF ANGELS.

THE next day, about the middle of the afternoon, a light step crossed the shed, and the great door opening gently, in walked Miss Alice Humphreys. The room was all "redd up," and Miss Fortune and her mother sat there at work; one picking over white beans at the table, the other in her usual seat by the fire, and at her usual employment, which was knitting. Alice came forward and asked the old lady how she did.

"Pretty well—oh, pretty well!" she answered, with a look of bland good-humour her face almost always wore,—“and glad to see you, dear. Take a chair.”

Alice did so, quite aware that the other person in the room was *not* glad to see her.

"And how goes the world with you, Miss Fortune?"

"Humph! it's a queer kind of world, I think," answered that lady, drily, sweeping some of the picked beans into her pan; "I get almost sick of it sometimes."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Alice, pleasantly; "may I ask? Has anything happened to trouble you?"

"Oh, no!" said the other somewhat impatiently; "nothing that's any matter to anyone but myself; it's no use speaking about it."

"Ah! Fortune never would take the world easy," said the old woman, shaking her head from side to side.

"Now, do hush, mother, will you!" said the daughter, turning round upon her with startling sharpness of look and tone; "take the world easy as you always did; I'm glad I ain't like you."

"I don't think it's a bad way, after all," said Alice; "what's the use of taking it hard, Miss Fortune?"

"The way one goes on!" said that lady, picking away at her beans very fast, and not answering Alice's question; "I'm tired of it. Toil and drive from morning to night; and what's the end of it all?"

"Not much," said Alice, gravely, "if our toiling looks no farther than *this* world. When we go we shall carry nothing away with us."

"It's a pity you warn't a minister, Miss Alice," said Miss Fortune, drily.

"Oh, no, Miss Fortune," said Alice, smiling; "the family would be

overstocked. My father is one, and my brother will be another ; a third would be too much. You must be so good as to let me preach without taking orders."

"Well, I wish every minister was as good a one as you'd make," said Miss Fortune, her hard face giving way a little ; "at any rate, nobody'd mind anything you'd say, Miss Alice."

"That would be unlucky, in one sense," said Alice ; "but I believe I know what you mean. But, Miss Fortune, no one would dream the world went very hard with you. I don't know anybody I think lives in more independent comfort and plenty, and has things more to her mind. I never come to the house that I'm not struck with the fine look of the farm and all that belongs to it."

"Yes," said the old lady, nodding her head two or three times ; "Mr. Van Brunt is a good farmer—there's no doubt about that."

"I wonder what *he'd* do," said Miss Fortune, quickly and sharply as before, "if there warn't a head to manage for him ! Oh, the farm's well enough, Miss Alice—'tain't that ; everyone knows where his own shoe pinches."

"I wish you'd let me into the secret then, Miss Fortune ; I'm a cobbler by profession."

Miss Fortune's ill-humour was giving way, but something disagreeable seemed again to cross her mind. Her brow darkened.

"I say it's a poor kind of world, and I'm sick of it ! One may slave and slave one's life out for other people, and what thanks do you get ?"

"There's a little body upstairs, or I'm much mistaken, who will give you very sincere thanks for every kindness shown her."

Miss Fortune tossed her head, and brushing the refuse beans into her lap, she pushed back her chair with a jerk to go to the fire with them.

"Much you know about her, Miss Alice ! Thanks, indeed ! I haven't seen the sign of such a thing since she's been here, for all I have worked and worked and had plague enough with her, I am sure."

"After all, Miss Fortune," said Alice, soberly, "it is not what we do for people that makes them love us ; everything depends on the way things are done. A look of love, a word of kindness, goes farther towards winning the heart than years of service without them."

"Does she say I am unkind to her ?" asked Miss Fortune, fiercely.

"Pardon me," said Alice, "words on her part are unnecessary ; it

is easy to see from your own that there is no love lost between you, and I am very sorry it is so."

"Love, indeed!" said Miss Fortune, with great indignation; "there never was any to lose, I can assure you. She plagues the very life out of me. Why, she hadn't been here three days before she went off with that girl Nancy Vawse that I had told her never to go near, and was gone all night; that's the time she got in the brook. And if you'd seen her face when I was scolding her about it! It was like seven thunder-clouds. Much you know about it! I dare say she's very sweet to you; that's the way she is to everybody beside me—they all think she's too good to live; and it just makes me mad!"

"She told me herself," said Alice, "of her behaving ill another time about her mother's letter. Didn't she ask your pardon? She said she would."

"Yes," said Miss Fortune, drily, "after a fashion."

"Has she had her letter yet?"

"No."

"How is she to-day?"

"Oh, she's well enough—she's sitting up. You can go up and see her."

"I will directly," said Alice. "But now, Miss Fortune, I am going to ask a favour of you. Will you do me a great pleasure?"

"Certainly, Miss Alice, if I can."

"If you think Ellen has been sufficiently punished for her ill-behaviour—if you do not think it right to withhold her letter still—will you let me have the pleasure of giving it to her? I should take it as a great favour to myself."

Miss Fortune made no kind of reply to this, but stalked out of the room, and in a few minutes stalked in again with the letter, which she gave to Alice, only saying shortly, "It came to me in a letter from her father."

"You are willing she should have it?" said Alice.

"Oh, yes; do what you like with it."

Alice now went softly upstairs. She found Ellen's door a little ajar, and looking in, could see Ellen seated in a rocking-chair, between the door and the fire, in her double-gown, and with her hymn-book in her hand. It happened that Ellen had spent a good part of that afternoon in crying for her lost letter; and the face that she turned to the door on hearing some slight noise outside was very white and thin.

indeed ; and though it was placid, too, her eye searched the crack of the door with a keen wistfulness that went to Alice's heart. But as the door was gently pushed open, and the eye caught the figure that stood behind it, the sudden and entire change of expression took away all her powers of speech. Ellen's face became radiant ; she rose from her chair, and as Alice came silently in and kneeling down to be near her took her in her arms, Ellen put both hers round Alice's neck and laid her face there ; one was too happy and the other too touched to say a word.

"My poor child !" was Alice's first expression. •

"No, I ain't," said Ellen, tightening the squeeze of her arms round Alice's neck ; "I am not poor at all now."

Alice presently rose, sat down in the rocking-chair, and took Ellen in her lap ; and Ellen rested her head on her bosom as she had been wont to do of old time on her mother's.

"I am too happy," she murmured. But she was weeping, and the current of tears seemed to gather force as it flowed. What was little Ellen thinking of just then ? Oh ! those times gone by, when she had sat just so ; her head pillowed on another as gentle a breast, kind arms wrapped round her, just as now ; the same little old double-gown ; the same weak helpless feeling ; the same committing herself to the strength and care of another ; how much the same, and oh ! how much not the same ! And Ellen knew both. Blessing as she did the breast on which she leaned, and the arms whose pressure she felt, they yet reminded her sadly of those most loved and so very far away.

"What is the matter, my love ?" said Alice, softly. •

"I don't know," whispered Ellen. •

"Are you so glad to see me ? or so sorry ? or what is it ?" •

"Oh, glad and sorry both, I think," said Ellen, with a long breath, and sitting up. •

"Have you wanted me so much, my poor child ?" •

"I cannot tell you how much," said Ellen, her words cut short.

"And didn't you know that I have been sick too ? What did you think had become of me ? Why, Mrs. Vawse was with me a whole week, and this is the first day I have been able to go out." •

"Was that it ?" said Ellen. "I did wonder, Miss Alice, why you did not come to see me ; but I never liked to ask Aunt Fortune, because——"

"Because what ?"

"I don't know ~~as~~ I ought to say what I was going to. I had a feeling she would be glad about what I was sorry about."

"Don't know *that* you ought to say," said Alice. "Remember, you are to study English with me."

Ellen smiled a glad smile.

"And you have had a weary two weeks of it, haven't you, dear?"

"Oh," said Ellen, with another long-drawn sigh, "how weary! Part of that time, to be sure, I was out of my head; but I have got *so* tired lying here all alone; Aunt Fortune coming in and out was just as good as nobody."

"Poor child!" said Alice, "you have had a worse time than I."

"I used to lie and watch that crack in the door at the foot of my bed," said Ellen, "and I got so tired of it I hated to see it, but when I opened my eyes I couldn't help looking at it, and watching all the little ins and outs in the crack till I was as sick of it as could be. And then if I looked towards the windows I would go right to counting the panes, first up and down, and then across. There was only the fire that I didn't get tired of looking at; I always liked to lie and look at that, except when it hurt my eyes. And, oh, how I wanted to see you, Miss Alice! You can't think how sad I felt that you didn't come to see me. I couldn't think what could be the matter."

"I should have been with you, dear, and not have left you, if I had not been tied at home myself."

"So I thought; and that made it seem so very strange. But, oh!" said Ellen, her face suddenly brightening, "don't you think, Mr. Van Brunt came up to see me last night? Wasn't it good of him? He even sat down and read to me; only think of that. And isn't he kind? He asked if I would like a rocking-chair; and of course I said yes, for these other chairs are dreadful, they break my back; and this morning, the first thing I knew, in walked Mr. Van Brunt with this nice rocking-chair. Just get up and see how nice it is—you see the back is cushioned, and the elbows, as well as the seat; it's queer-looking, ain't it? but it's very comfortable. Wasn't it good of him?"

"It was very kind, I think. But do you know, Ellen, I am going to have a quarrel with you?"

"What about?" said Ellen. "I don't believe it's anything very bad, for you look pretty good-humoured, considering."

"Nothing *very* bad," said Alice, "but still enough to quarrel about. You have twice said '*ain't*' since I have been here."

"Oh," said Ellen, laughing, "is that all?"

"Yes," said Alice, "and my English ears don't like it at all."

"Then they shan't hear it," said Ellen, kissing her. "I don't know what makes me say it; I never used to. But I've got more to tell you; I've had more visitors. Who do you think came to see me?—you'd never guess—Nancy Vawse!—Mr. Van Brunt came in the very nick of time, when I was almost worried to death with her. Only think of *her* coming up here! unknown to everybody. And she stayed an age, and how she *did* go on. She cracked nuts on the hearth; she got every stitch of my clothes out of my trunk and scattered them over the floor; she tried to make me drink gruel till between us we spilled it on the bed; and she had begun to tickle me when Mr. Van Brunt came. Oh, wasn't I glad to see him! And when Aunt Fortune came up and saw it all she was as angry as she could be; and said it was my fault the whole of it! that if I hadn't scraped acquaintance with Nancy when she had forbidden me all this would never have happened."

"There is some truth in that, isn't there, Ellen?"

"Perhaps so; but I think it might all have happened whether or no. Oh, I have been so tired to-day, Miss Alice! Aunt Fortune has been in such a bad humour."

"What put her in a bad humour?"

"Why, all this about Nancy in the first place; and then I know she didn't like Mr. Van Brunt's bringing the rocking-chair for me. And then Mrs. Van Brunt's coming—I don't think she liked that. Oh, Mrs. Van Brunt came to see me this morning and brought me a custard. How many people are kind to me!—everywhere I go."

"I hope, dear Ellen, you don't forget whose kindness sends them all."

"I don't, Miss Alice; I always think of that now."

"Then I hope you can bear unkindness from one poor woman, without feeling any ill-will towards her in return."

"I don't think I feel ill-will towards her," said Ellen; "I always try as hard as I can not to; but I can't *like* her, Miss Alice; and I do get out of patience."

"But remember, 'charity suffereth long and is kind.'"

"And I try all the while, dear Miss Alice, to keep down my bad feelings," said Ellen, her eyes watering as she spoke; "I try and pray to get rid of them, and I hope I shall by-and-by."

Alice drew her closer.

"I have felt very sad part of to-day," said Ellen presently; "Aunt

Fortune, and my being so lonely, and my poor letter, altogether ; but part of the time I felt a great deal better. I was learning that lovely hymn,—do you know it, Miss Alice? ‘Poor, weak, and worthless, though I am’?—”

Alice went on :—

“ ‘I have a rich almighty friend,
Jesus the Saviour is His name,
He freely loves and without end.’ ”

“Oh, dear Ellen, whoever can say that has no right to be unhappy. No matter what happens, we have enough to be glad of.”

“And then I was thinking of those words in the Psalms,—‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven ; whose sin is covered.’ ”

“Oh, yes, indeed !” said Alice. “It is a shame that any trifles should worry much those whose sins are forgiven them and who are the children of the great King. Poor Miss Fortune never knew the sweetness of those words. We ought to be sorry for her, and pray for her, Ellen ; and never, never, even in thought, return evil for evil. It is not like Christ to do so.”

“I will not, I will not, if I can help it,” said Ellen.

“You can help it ; but there is only one way. Now, Ellen dear, I have three pieces of news for you that I think you will like. One concerns you, another myself, and the third concerns both you and myself. Which will you have first ?”

“Three pieces of good news !” said Ellen with opening eyes ; “I think I’ll have my part first.”

Directing Ellen’s eyes to her pocket, Alice slowly made the corner of the letter show itself. Ellen’s colour came and went quick as it was drawn forth ; but when it was fairly out and she knew it again, she flung herself upon it with a desperate eagerness Alice had not looked for ; she was startled at the half-frantic way in which the child clasped and kissed it, weeping bitterly at the same time. Her transport was almost hysterical. She had opened the letter, but she was not able to read a word ; and quitting Alice’s arms she threw herself upon the bed, sobbing in a mixture of joy and sorrow that seemed to take away her reason. Alice looked on surprised a moment, but only a moment, and turned away.

When Ellen was able to begin her letter the reading of it served to throw her back into fresh fits of tears. Many a word of Mrs. Montgomery’s went so to her little daughter’s heart that its very inmost chords of love and tenderness were wrung. It is true the letter was

short and very simple ; but it came from her mother's heart ; it was written by her mother's hand ; and the very old-remembered handwriting had mighty power to move her. She was so wrapped up in her own feelings that through it all she never noticed that Alice was not near her ; that Alice did not speak to comfort her. When the letter had been read time after time, and wept over again and again, and Ellen at last was folding it up for the present, she bethought herself of her friend and turned to look after her. Alice was sitting by the window, her face hid in her hands, and as Ellen drew near she was surprised to see that *her* tears were flowing and her breast heaving. Ellen came quite close, and softly laid her hand on Alice's shoulder. But it drew no attention.

"Miss Alice," said Ellen, almost fearfully, "*dear* Miss Alice," and her own eyes filled fast again, "what is the matter? won't you tell me? Oh, don't do so! please don't!"

"I will not," said Alice, lifting her head; "I am sorry I have troubled you, dear; I am sorry I could not help it."

She kissed Ellen, who stood anxious and sorrowful by her side, and brushed away her tears.

"What is the matter, dear Miss Alice? what has happened to trouble you? won't you tell me?" Ellen was almost crying herself.

Alice came back to the rocking-chair, and took Ellen in her arms again; but she did not answer her. Leaning her face against Ellen's forehead she remained silent. Ellen ventured to ask no more questions; but lifting her hand once or twice caressingly to Alice's face she was distressed to find her cheek wet still. Alice spoke at last.

"It isn't fair not to tell you what is the matter, dear Ellen, since I have let you see me sorrowing. It is nothing new, nor anything I would have otherwise if I could. It is only that I have had a mother once, and have lost her; and you have brought back the old time so strongly, that I could not command myself."

Ellen felt a hot tear drop upon her forehead, and again ventured to speak her sympathy only by silently stroking Alice's cheek.

"It is all passed now," said Alice, "it is all well. I would not have her back again. I shall go to her I hope by-and-by."

"Oh no! you must stay with me," said Ellen, clasping both arms round her.

There was a long silence, during which they remained locked in each other's arms.

"Ellen dear," said Alice at length, "we are both motherless, for the present at least—both of us almost alone; I think God has brought us together to be a comfort to each other. We will be sisters while He permits us to be so. Don't call me Miss Alice any more. You shall be my little sister and I will be your elder sister, and my home shall be your home as well."

Ellen's arms were drawn very close round her companion at this, but she said nothing, and her face was laid in Alice's bosom. There was another very long pause. Then Alice spoke in a livelier tone.

"Come, Ellen! look up; you and I have forgotten ourselves; it isn't good for sick people to get down in the dumps. Look up and let me see these pale cheeks. Don't you want something to eat?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, faintly.

"What would you say to a cup of chicken broth?"

"Oh, I should like it very much!" said Ellen, with new energy.

"Margery made me some particularly nice, as she always does; and I took it into my head a little might not come amiss to you; so I resolved to stand the chance of Sharp's jolting it all over me, and I rode down with a little pail of it on my arm. Let me rake open these coals and you shall have some directly."

"I am so much obliged to you," said Ellen, "for do you know I have got quite tired of gruel, and panada I can't bear."

"Then I am very glad I brought it."

While it was warming Alice washed Ellen's gruel cup and spoon; and presently she had the satisfaction of seeing Ellen eating the broth with that keen enjoyment none know but those that have been sick and are getting well. She smiled to see her gaining strength almost in the very act of swallowing.

"Ellen," said she, presently, "I have been considering your dressing-table. It looks rather doleful. I'll make you a present of some dimity, and when you come to see me you shall make a cover of it that will reach down to the floor and hide those long legs."

"That wouldn't do at all," said Ellen; "Aunt Fortune would go off into all sorts of fits."

"What about?"

"Why, the washing, Miss Alice—to have such a great thing to wash every now and then. You can't think what a fuss she makes if I have more than just so many white clothes in the wash every week."

"That's too bad," said Alice. "Suppose you bring it up to me—it

wouldn't be often—and I'll have it washed for you, if you care enough about it to take the trouble."

"Oh, indeed I do!" said Ellen; "I should like it very much, and I'll get Mr. Yan Brunt to—no, I can't, Aunt Fortune won't let me; I was going to say I would get him to saw off the legs and make it lower for me, and then my dressing-box would stand so nicely on the top. Maybe I can yet. Oh, I never showed you my boxes and things."

Ellen brought them all out and displayed their beauties. In the course of going over the writing-desk she came to the secret drawer and a little money in it.

"Oh, that puts me in mind," she said. "Miss Alice, this money is to be spent for some poor child; now I've been thinking that Nancy has behaved so to me I should like to give her something to show her that I don't feel unkindly about it; what do you think would be a good thing?"

"I don't know, Ellen; I'll take the matter into consideration."

"Do you think a Bible would do?"

"Perhaps that would do as well as anything; I'll think about it."

"I should like to do it very much," said Ellen, "for she has vexed me wonderfully."

"Well, Ellen, would you like to hear my other pieces of news; or have you no curiosity?"

"Oh yes, indeed," said Ellen; "I had forgotten it entirely; what is it, Miss Alice?"

"You know I told you one concerns only myself, but it is great news to me. I learnt this morning that my brother will come to spend the holidays with me. It is many months since I have seen him."

"Does he live far away?" said Ellen.

"Yes; he has gone far away to pursue his studies, and cannot come home often. The other piece of news is that I intend, if you have no objection, to ask Miss Fortune's leave to have you spend the holidays with me too."

"Oh, delightful!" said Ellen, starting up and clapping her hands, and then throwing them round her adopted sister's neck; "dear Alice, how good you are!"

"Then I suppose I may reckon upon your consent," said Alice, "and I'll speak to Miss Fortune without delay."

"Oh, thank you, dear Miss Alice; how glad I am! I shall be happy all the time from now till then thinking of it. You aren't going?"

"I must."

"Ah, don't go yet ! Sit down again ; you know you're my sister—don't you want to read mamma's letter?"

"If you please, Ellen, I should like it very much."

She sat down, and Ellen gave her the letter, and stood by while she read it, watching her with glistening eyes ; and though as she saw Alice's fill her own overflowed again, she hung over her still to the last ; going over every line this time with a new pleasure.

"NEW YORK, *Saturday, Nov. 22, 18—.*

"MY DEAR ELLEN,

"I meant to have written to you before, but have been scarcely able to do so. I did make one or two efforts which came to nothing ; I was obliged to give it up before finishing anything that could be called a letter. To-day I feel much stronger than I have at any time since your departure.

"I have missed you, my dear child, very much. There is not an hour in the day, nor a half hour, that the want of you does not come home to my heart ; and I think I have missed you in my very dreams. This separation is a very hard thing to bear. But the hand that has arranged it does nothing amiss ; we must trust Him, my daughter, that all will be well. I feel it is well, though sometimes the thought of your dear little face is almost too much for me. I will thank God I have had such a blessing so long, and I now commit my treasure to Him. It is an unspeakable comfort to me to do this, for nothing committed to His care is ever forgotten or neglected. Oh, my daughter, never forget to pray ; never slight it. It is almost my only refuge, now I have lost you, and it bears me up. How often—how often, through years gone by, when heart-sick and faint, I have fallen on my knees, and presently there have been as it were, drops of cool water sprinkled upon my spirit's fever. Learn to love prayer, dear Ellen, and then you will have a cure for all the sorrows of life. And keep this letter, that if ever you are like to forget it, your mother's testimony may come to mind again.

"My tea, that used to be so pleasant, has become a sad meal to me. I drink it mechanically and set down my cup, remembering only that the dear little hand which used to minister to my wants is near me no more. My child ! my child ! words are poor to express the heart's yearnings ; my spirit is near you all the time.

"Your old gentleman has paid me several visits. The day after you went came some beautiful pigeons. I sent word back that you

were no longer here to enjoy his gifts, and the next day he came to see me. He has shown himself very kind. And all this, dear Ellen, had for its immediate cause your proper and lady-like behaviour in the store. That thought has been sweeter to me than all the old gentleman's birds and fruit. I am sorry to inform you that though I have seen him so many times I am still perfectly ignorant of his name.

"We set sail Monday, in the *England*. Your father has secured a nice state-room for me, and I have a store of comforts laid up for the voyage. So next week you may imagine me out on the broad ocean, with nothing but sky and clouds and water to be seen around me, and probably much too sick to look at those. Never mind that; the sickness is good for me.

"I will write you as soon as I can again, and send by the first conveyance.

"And now, my dear baby—my precious child—farewell. May the blessing of God be with you!—Your affectionate mother,

"E. MONTGOMERY."

"You ought to be a good child, Ellen," said Alice, as she dashed away some tears. "Thank you for letting me see this; it has been a great pleasure to me."

"And now," said Ellen, 'you feel as if you knew mamma a little."

"Enough to honour and respect her very much. Now, good-bye, my love; I must be at home before it is late. I will see you again before Christmas comes."

CHAPTER XXII.

SHOWS HOW MR. VAN BRUNT COULD BE SHARP ON SOME THINGS

TO Ellen's sorrow she was pronounced next morning well enough to come downstairs; her aunt averring that "it was no use to keep a fire burning up there for nothing." She must get up and dress in the cold again; and winter had fairly set in now; the 19th of December rose clear and keen. Ellen looked sighingly at the heap of ashes and the dead brands in the fireplace where the bright little fire had blazed so cheerfully the evening before. But regrets did not help the matter; and shivering she began to dress as fast as she could. Since her illness a basin and pitcher had been brought into her room, so the washing at the spout was ended for the present; and though the basin had

no place but a chair, and the pitcher must stand on the floor, Ellen thought herself too happy. But how cold it was ! The wind swept past her windows, giving wintry shakes to the panes of glass, and through many an opening in the wooden frame-work of the house it came in and saluted Ellen's bare arms and neck. She hurried to finish her dressing, and wrapping her double-gown over all, went down to the kitchen. It was another climate there. A great fire was burning that it quite cheered Ellen's heart to look at it ; and the air seemed to be full of coffee and buckwheat cakes ; Ellen almost thought she should get enough breakfast by the sense of smell.

"Ah ! here you are," said Miss Fortune. "What have you got that thing on for ?"

"It was so cold upstairs," said Ellen, drawing up her shoulders.

"Well, 'tain't cold here ; you'd better pull it off right away. You'll be warm enough directly. Breakfast 'll warm you."

Ellen felt almost inclined to quarrel with the breakfast that was offered in exchange for her comfortable wrapper ; she pulled it off, however, and sat down without saying anything. Mr. Van Brunt put some cakes on her plate.

"If breakfast's agoing to warm you," said he, "make haste and get something down ; you're as blue as skim milk."

"Am I ?" said Ellen, laughing ; "I feel blue ; but I can't eat such a pile of cakes as that, Mr. Van Brunt."

As a general thing the meals at Miss Fortune's were silent solemnities ; an occasional consultation, or a few questions and remarks about farm affairs, being all that ever passed. The breakfast this morning was a singular exception to the common rule.

"I am in a regular quandary," said the mistress of the house, when the meal was about half over, "how I am ever going to get those apples and sausage-meat done. If I go to doing 'em myself I shall about get through by spring."

"Why don't you make a bee ?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Ain't enough of either on 'em to make it worth while. I ain't agoing to have all the bother of a bee without something to show for't."

"Turn 'em both into one," suggested her counsellor, "let 'em pare apples in one room and cut pork in t'other."

"But I wonder who ever heard of such a thing before ?" said Miss Fortune, pausing with her cup of coffee half-way to her lips. Presently, however, it was carried to her mouth, drunk off, and set down with an

air of determination. "I don't care," said she, "if it never was heard of. I'll do it for 'once anyhow. But I won't have them to tea, mind you; I'd rather throw apples and all into the fire at once. I'll have but one plague of setting tables, and that I won't have 'em to tea. I'll make it up to 'em in the supper though."

"I'll take care to publish that," said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Don't you go and do such a thing," said Miss Fortune, earnestly.

"I'll go round and ask 'em myself to come Monday evening."

"Monday evening--then I suppose you'd like to have up the sleigh this afternoon. Who's coming?"

"I don't know; I ha'n't asked 'em yet."

"They'll every soul come that's asked, that you may depend."

Miss Fortune bridled a little at the implied tribute to her house-keeping.

"If I was some folks I wouldn't let people know I was in such a mighty hurry to get a good supper," she observed, rather scornfully.

"Humph!" said Mr. Van Brunt; "I think a good supper ain't a bad thing; and I've no objection to folks knowing it."

"Pshaw! I didn't mean *you*," said Miss Fortune; "I was thinking of those Lawsons, and other folks."

"If you're agoing to ask *them* to your bee you ain't of my mind."

"Well, I am though," replied Miss Fortune; "there's a good many hands of 'em; they can turn off a good lot of work in an evening; and they always take care to get me to *their* bees. I may as well get something out of them in return if I can."

"They'll reckon on getting as much as they can out o' *you*, if they come, there's no sort of doubt in my mind. It's my belief Mimy Lawson will kill herself some of these days upon green corn."

"Well, let them kill themselves if they like," said Miss Fortune; "I am sure I am willing; there'll be enough; I ain't agoing to mince matters when once I begin. Now, let me see. There's five of the Lawson's to begin with—I suppose they'll all come; Bill Huff, and Jany, that's seven, and the Hitchcocks, there's three of them, that'll make ten—"

"Dentison's ain't far from there," said Mr. Van Brunt. "Dan Dennison's a fine hand at a'most anything, in doors or out."

"Well, I guess I'll let the Dennison's come," said Miss Fortune; "that makes twelve, and you and your mother are fourteen. Suppose that man Marshchalk will come dangling along after the Hitchcocks."

"To be sure he will; and his aun Miss Janet, will come with him most likely."

"Well, there's no help for it," said Miss Fortune. "That makes sixteen."

"Will you ask Miss Alice?"

"Not I! she's another of your proud set. I don't want to see anybody that thinks she's going to do me a favour by coming."

Ellen's lips opened, but wisdom came in time to stop the words that were on her tongue. It did not, however, prevent the quick little turn of her head which showed what she thought, and the pale cheeks were for a moment bright enough.

"She is, and I don't care who hears it," repeated Miss Fortune. "I suppose she'd look as sober as a judge too if she saw cider on the table; they say she won't touch a drop ever, and thinks it's wicked; and if that ain't setting oneself up for better than other folks I don't know what is."

"I saw her pating apples at the Huffs' though," said Mr. Van Brunt, "and as pleasant as anybody; but she didn't stay to supper."

"I'd ask Mrs. Vawse if I could get word to her," said Miss Fortune; "but I can never travel up that mountain. If I get a sight of Nancy I'll tell her."

"There she is, then," said Mr. Van Brunt, looking towards the little window that opened into the shed. And there indeed was the face of Miss Nancy pressed flat against the glass, peering into the room. Miss Fortune beckoned to her.

"That is the most impudent, shameless, outrageous piece of—— What were you doing at the window?" said she, as Nancy came in.

"Looking at you, Miss Fortune," said Nancy, coolly. "What have you been talking about this great while? If there had only been a pane of glass broken I needn't have asked."

"Hold your tongue," said Miss Fortune, "and listen to me. You tell your granny I am going to have a bee here next Monday evening, and ask her if she'll come to it."

Nancy nodded. "If it's good weather," she added, conditionally.

"Stop, Nancy!" said Miss Fortune, "here!"—for Nancy was shutting the door behind her. "As sure as you come here Monday night without your grandma you'll go out of the house quicker than you come in; see if you don't!"

With another gracious nod and smile Nancy departed.

"Well," said Mr. Van Brunt, rising, "I'll despatch this business downstairs, and then I'll bring up the sleigh. The pickle's ready I suppose?"

"No, it ain't," said Miss Fortune, "I couldn't make it yesterday; but it's all in the kettle, and I told Sam to make a fire downstairs, so you can put it on when you go down. The kits are all ready, and the salt, and everything else."

Mr. Van Brunt went down the stairs that led to the lower kitchen; and Miss Fortune, to make up for lost time, set about her morning's work with even an uncommon measure of activity. Ellen, in consideration of her being still weak, was not required to do anything. She sat and looked on, keeping out of the way of her bustling aunt as far as it was possible; but Miss Fortune's gyrations were of that character that no one could tell five minutes beforehand what she might consider "in the way." Ellen wished for her quiet room again. Mr. Van Brunt's voice sounded downstairs in tones of business; what could he be about? it must be very uncommon business that kept him in the house. Ellen grew restless with the desire to go and see, and to change her aunt's company for his; and no sooner was Miss Fortune fairly shut up in the buttery at some secret work than Ellen gently opened the door at the head of the lower stairs and looked down. Mr. Van Brunt was standing at the bottom and he looked up.

"May I come down there, Mr. Van Brunt?" said Ellen, softly.

"Come down here? to be sure you may! You may always come straight where I am without asking any questions."

Ellen went down. But before she reached the bottom stair she stopped with almost a start, and stood fixed with such a horrified face that neither Mr. Van Brunt nor Sam Larkins, who was there, could help laughing.

"What's the matter?" said the former, "they're all dead enough, Miss Ellen, you needn't be scared."

Three enormous hogs which had been killed the day before greeted Ellen's eyes. They lay in different parts of the room, with each a cob in his mouth. A fourth lay stretched upon his back on the kitchen table, which was drawn out into the middle of the floor. Ellen stood fast on the stair.

"Have they been killed!" was her first astonished exclamation, to which Sam responded with another burst.

"Be quiet, Sam Larkins," said Mr. Van Brunt. "Yes, Miss Ellen, they've been killed sure enough."

"And what's going to be done with them now?" said Ellen.

"I am just going to cut them up and lay them down. Bless my heart! you never see nothing of the kind before, did you?"

"No," said Ellen. "What do you mean by 'laying them down,' Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Why, laying them down in salt for pork and hams. You want to see the whole operation, don't you? Well, here's a seat for you. You'd better fetch that painted coat o' yours and wrap round you, for it ain't quite so warm here as upstairs; but it's getting warmer. Sam, just you shut that door to, and throw on another log."

Sam built up as large a fire as could be made under a very large kettle that hung in the chimney. When Ellen came down in her wrapper she was established close in the chimney corner; and Mr. Van Brunt, not thinking her quite safe from the keen currents of air that would find their way into the room, despatched Sam for an old buffalo robe that lay in the shed. This he himself with great care wrapped round her, feet and chair and all, and secured it in various places with old forks. He declared then she looked for all the world like an Indian, except her face, and in high good-humour he went to cutting up the pork, and Ellen from out of her buffalo robe watched him.

When the cutting up was all done, the hams and shoulders were put in a cask by themselves and Mr. Van Brunt began to pack down the other pieces in the kits, strewing them with an abundance of salt.

"What's the use of putting all that salt with the pork, Mr. Van Brunt?" said Ellen.

"It wouldn't keep good without that; it would spoil very quick."

"Are you going to do the hams in the same way?"

"No; they're to go in that pickle over the fire."

"In this kettle? what is in it?" said Ellen.

"You must ask Miss Fortune about that; sugar and salt and saltpetre and molasses, and I don't know what all."

"And will this make the hams so different from the rest of the pork?"

"No; they've got to be smoked after they have laid in that for a while."

"Smoked!" said Ellen; "how?"

"Why, ha'n't you been in the smoke-house? The hams has to be taken out of the pickle and hung up there; and then we make a little

fire of oak chips and keep it burning night and day for three or four weeks."

"How very curious!" said Ellen. "Then it's the smoke that gives them that nice taste? I never knew smoke was good for anything before."

"Ellen!" said the voice of Miss Fortune from the top of the stairs, "come right up here this minute! you'll catch your death!"

Ellen's countenance fell.

"There's no sort of fear of that, ma'am," said Mr. Van Brunt quietly, "and Miss Ellen is fastened up so she can't get loose; and I can't let her out just now."

The upper door was shut again pretty sharply, but that was the only audible expression of opinion with which Miss Fortune favoured them.

"I guess my leather curtains keep off the wind, don't they?" said Mr. Van Brunt.

"Yes, indeed they do," said Ellen, "I don't feel a breath; I am as warm as a toast, Mr. Van Brunt."

"I thought that 'ere old buffalo had done its work," said he, "but I'll never say anything is good for nothing again. Have you found out where the apples are yet?"

"No," said Ellen.

"Ha'n't Miss Fortune showed you? Well, it's time you'd know. Sam, take that little basket and go fill it at the bin."

Sam went into the cellar, and presently returned with the basket nicely filled. He handed it to Ellen.

"Are all these for me?" she said in surprise.

"Every one of 'em," said Mr. Van Brunt.

"But I don't like to," said Ellen; "what will Aunt Fortune say?"

"She won't say a word," said Mr. Van Brunt, "and don't you say a word neither, but whenever you want apples just go to the bin and take 'em. I give you leave. It's right at the end of the far cellar, at the left-hand corner; there are the bins and all sorts of apples in 'em. You've got a pretty variety there, ha'n't you?"

"Oh, all sorts," said Ellen, "and what beauties! and I love apples very much."

The pork was all packed; the kettle was lifted off the fire. Mr. Van Brunt was wiping his hands from the salt.

"And now I suppose I must go," said Ellen, with a little sigh.

"Why, I must go," said he, "so I suppose I may as well let you out of your tent first."

"I've had such a nice time," said Ellen; "I had got *so* tired of doing nothing upstairs. I am *very* much obliged to you, Mr. Van Brunt."

Ellen ran upstairs with her apples. To bestow them safely in her closet was her first care; the rest of the morning was spent in increasing weariness and listlessness. She had brought down her little hymn-book, thinking to amuse herself with learning a hymn, but it would not do; eyes and head both refused their part of the work; and when at last Mr. Van Brunt came in to a late dinner, he found Ellen seated flat on the hearth before the fire, her right arm curled round upon the hard wooden bottom of one of the chairs, and her head pillowed upon that, fast asleep.

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Van Brunt, "what's become of that 'ere rocking-cheer?"

"It's upstairs, I suppose. You can go fetch it if you've a mind to," answered Miss Fortune, dully enough.

He did so immediately; and Ellen barely waked up to feel herself lifted from the floor, and placed in the friendly rocking-chair; Mr. Van Brunt remarking at the same time that "it might be well enough to let well folks lie on the floor, and sleep on cheers, but cushions warn't a bit too soft for sick ones."

Among the cushions Ellen went to sleep again with a much better prospect of rest; and either sleeping or dozing passed away the time for a good while.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW MISS FORTUNE WENT OUT AND PLEASURE CAME IN.

SHE was thoroughly roused at last by the slamming of the house door after her aunt. She and Mr. Van Brunt had gone forth on their sleighing expedition, and Ellen waked to find herself quite alone.

She could not long have doubted that her aunt was away, even if she had not caught a glimpse of her bonnet going out of the shed-door,—the stillness was so uncommon. No such quiet could be with Miss Fortune anywhere about the premises. The old grandmother must have been abed and asleep too, for a cricket under the hearth and a wood-fire in the chimney had it all to themselves, and made the only sounds that were heard,

Miss Fortune had left the room put up in the last extreme of neatness. Not a speck of dust could be supposed to lie on the shining

painted floor; the back of every chair was in its place against the wall. The very hearthstone shone and the heads of the large iron nails in the floor were polished to steel. Ellen sat a while listening to the soothing chirrup of the cricket and the pleasant crackling of the flames. It was a fine cold winter's day. The two little windows at the far end of the kitchen looked out upon an expanse of snow; and the large lilac bush that grew close by the wall, moved lightly by the wind, drew its icy fingers over the panes of glass. Wintry it was without; but that made the warmth and comfort within seem all the more. Ellen would have enjoyed it very much if she had had anyone to talk to; as it was she felt rather lonely and sad. She was sitting the very picture of meditation when the door opened and Alice Humphreys came in. Ellen started up.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you! I'm all alone."

"Left alone, are you?" said Alice, as Ellen's warm lips were pressed again and again to her cold cheeks.

"Yes, Aunt Fortune's gone out. Come and sit down here in the rocking-chair. How cold you are. Oh, do you know she is going to have a great bee here Monday evening? What is a *bee*?"

Alice smiled. "Why," said she, "when people here in the country have so much of any kind of work to do that their own hands are not enough for it, they send and call in their neighbours to help them,—that's a bee. A large party in the course of a long evening can do a great deal."

"Aunt Fortune is going to ask sixteen people. I wish you were coming!"

"How do you know but I am?"

"Oh, I know you aren't. Aunt Fortune isn't going to ask you."

"You are sure of that, are you?"

"Yes, I wish I wasn't. Oh, how she vexed me this morning by something she said."

"You mustn't get vexed so easily, my child. Don't let every little untoward thing roughen your temper."

"But I couldn't help it, dear Miss Alice; it was about you. I don't know whether I ought to tell you; but I don't think you'll mind it, and I know it isn't true. She said she didn't want you to come because you were one of the proud set."

"And what did you say?"

"Nothing. I had it just on the end of my tongue to say, 'It's no such thing;' but I didn't say it."

"I am glad you were so wise. Dear Ellen, that is nothing to be vexed about. If it were true indeed you might be sorry. I trust Miss Fortune is mistaken. I shall try and find some way to make her change her mind. I am glad you told me."

"I am *so* glad you are come, dear Alice!" said Ellen again. "I wish I could have you always!" and the long, very close pressure of her two arms about her friend said as much. There was a long pause. The cheek of Alice rested on Ellen's head which nestled against her; both were busily thinking; but neither spoke; and the cricket chirped and the flames crackled without being listened to.

"Miss Alice," said Ellen, after a long time, "I wish you would talk over a hymn with me. Mamma used to do it sometimes. I have been thinking a great deal about her to-day; and I think I'm very different from what I ought to be. I wish you would talk to me and make me better, Miss Alice."

"I am afraid I shall be a poor substitute for your mother, Ellen. What hymn shall we take?"

"Any one—this one if you like. Mamma likes it very much. I was looking it over to-day.

"A charge to keep I have—
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

Alice read the first line and paused.

"There now," said Ellen, "what is a charge?"

"It is something given one in trust, to be done or taken care of. I remember very well once when I was about your age my mother had occasion to go out for half an hour, and she left me in charge of my little baby sister; she gave me a *charge* not to let anything disturb her while she was away, and to keep her asleep if I could."

"I understand what a charge is," said Ellen, after a little; "but what is this charge the hymn speaks of? What charge have I to keep?"

"The hymn goes on to tell you. The next line gives you part of it. 'A God to glorify.'"

"To glorify?" said Ellen doubtfully.

"Yes—that is to honour,—to give Him all the honour that belongs to Him."

"But can I honour Him?"

"Most certainly; either honour or dishonour; you cannot help doing one."

"I!" said Ellen again.

"Must not your behaviour speak either well or ill for the mother who has brought you up?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Very well; when a child of God lives as he ought to do, people cannot help having high and noble thoughts of that glorious One, whom he serves, and that perfect law he obeys. Little as they may love the ways of religion, in their own secret hearts they *cannot help* confessing that there is a God and that they ought to serve Him. But a worldlying, and still more an unfaithful Christian, just helps people forget there is such a Being, and makes them think either that religion is a sham, or that they may safely go on despising it. I have heard it said, Ellen, that Christians are the only Bible some people ever read; and it is true; all they know of religion is what they get from the lives of its professors; and oh! were the world but full of the right kind of example, the kingdom of darkness could not stand. 'Arise, shine!' is a word that every Christian ought to take home."

"But how can I shine?" asked Ellen.

"My dear Ellen!—in the faithful, patient, self-denying performance of every duty as it comes to hand—'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

"It is very little that I can do," said Ellen.

"Perhaps more than you think, but never mind that. All are not great stars in the church; you may be only a little rushlight; see you burn well!"

"I remember," said Ellen, musing, "pamma once told me when I was going somewhere that people would think strangely of *her* if I didn't behave well."

"Certainly. You understand now, don't you, how Christians may honour or dishonour their Heavenly Father?"

"Yes, I do; but it makes me afraid to think of it."

"Afraid? It ought rather to make you glad. It is a great honour and happiness for us to be permitted to honour Him:—

• "A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

Yes, that is the great duty you owe yourself. Oh, never forget it, dear Ellen! And whatever would hinder you, have nothing to do with it. 'What will it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—

• "To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfil——"

"What is 'the present age'?" said Ellen.

"All the people who are living in the world at this time."

"But, dear Alice, what can I do to the present age?"

"Nothing to the most part of them certainly; and yet, dear Ellen, if your little rushlight shines well there is just so much the less darkness in the world, though perhaps you light only a very little corner. Every Christian is a blessing to the world; another grain of salt to go towards sweetening and saving the mass."

"That is very pleasant to think of," said Ellen, musing.

"Oh, if we were but full of love to our Saviour, how pleasant it would be to do anything for Him! How many ways we should find of honouring Him by doing good."

"I wish you would tell me some of the ways that I can do it," said Ellen.

"You will find them fast enough if you seek them, Ellen. No one is so poor or so young but he has one talent at least to use for God."

"I wish I knew what mine is," said Ellen.

"Is your daily example as perfect as it can be?"

Ellen was silent and shook her head.

"Christ pleased not Himself, and went about doing good; and He said, 'If any man serve Me, let him *follow Me*.' Remember that. Perhaps your aunt is unreasonable and unkind; see with how much patience and perfect sweetness of temper you can bear and forbear; see if you cannot win her over by untiring gentleness, obedience, and meekness. Is there no improvement to be made here?"

"Oh me, yes!" answered Ellen with a sigh.

"Then your old grandmother. Can you do nothing to cheer her life in her old age and helplessness? Can't you find some way of giving her pleasure? some way of amusing a long tedious hour now and then?"

Ellen looked very grave; in her inmost heart she knew this was a duty she shrank from.

"He 'went about doing good.' Keep that in mind. A kind word spoken—a little thing done to smooth the way of one, or lighten the load of another—teaching those who need teaching—entreating those who are walking in the wrong way. Oh, my child, there is work enough!—

" 'To serve the present age,

My calling to fulfil;

O may it all my powers engage

To do my Master's will.

"Arm me with jealous care,
As in thy sight to live;
And O! thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give."

"An account of what?" said Ellen.

"You know what an account is. If I give Thomas a dollar to spend for me at Carra-carra, I expect he will give me an exact *account* when he comes back what he has done with every shilling of it. So must we give an account of what we have done with everything our Lord has committed to our care—our hands, our tongue, our time, our minds, our influence; how much we have honoured Him, how much good we have done to others, how fast and how far we have grown holy and fit for heaven."

"It almost frightens me to hear you talk, Miss Alice."

"Not *frighten*, dear Ellen,—that is not the word; *sober* we ought to be; mindful to do nothing we shall not wish to remember in the great day of account. Do you recollect how that day is described? Where is your Bible?"

She opened to the 20th chapter of the Revelation and read it.

Ellen shivered. "That is dreadful!" she said, when Alice had finished reading.

"It will be a dreadful day to all but those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life; not dreadful to them, dear Ellen."

"But shall I be sure, dear Alice, that *my* name is written there? and I can't be happy if I am not sure."

"My dear child," said Alice, tenderly, as Ellen's anxious face and glistening eyes were raised to hers, "if you love Jesus Christ you may know you are His child, and none shall pluck you out of His hand."

"But how can I tell whether I do love Him really? Sometimes I think I do, and then again sometimes I am afraid I don't at all."

Alice answered in the words of Christ:—"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

"Oh, I don't keep His commandments!" said Ellen, the tears running down her cheeks.

"*Perfectly*, none of us do. But, dear Ellen, *that* is not the question. Is it your heart's desire and effort to keep them? Are you grieved when you fail? There is the point. You cannot love Christ without loving to please Him."

Ellen rose and put both her arms round Alice's neck, her tears flowing fast.

"I sometimes think I do love Him a little," she said, "but I do so many wrong things. But He will teach me to love Him if I ask Him, won't He, dear Alice?"

"Indeed He will, dear Ellen," said Alice, folding her arms round her little adopted sister, "*indeed* He will. He has promised that. Remember what He told somebody who was almost in despair. 'Fear not; only believe.'"

Alice's neck was wet with Ellen's tears; and after they had ceased to flow her arms kept their hold and her head its resting-place on Alice's shoulder for some time. It was necessary at last for Alice to leave her.

Ellen waited till the sound of her horse's footsteps died away on the road; and then sinking on her knees beside her rocking-chair, she poured forth her whole heart in prayers and tears. She had knelt down very uneasy; but she knew that God has promised to be the hearer of prayer, and she rose up very comforted, her mind fixing on those most sweet words Alice had brought to her memory: "Fear not; only believe." When Miss Fortune returned, Ellen was quietly asleep again in her rocking-chair, with her face very pale but calm as an evening sunbeam.

"Well, I declare, if that child ain't sleeping her life away!" said Miss Fortune. "She's slept this whole blessed forenoon; I suppose she'll want to be alive and dancing the whole night to pay for it!"

"I can tell you what she'll want a sight more," said Mr. Van Brunt, who had followed her in; it must have been to see about Ellen, for he was never known to do such a thing before or since;—"I'll tell you what she'll want, and that's a right hot supper. She eat as high as possible nothing at all this noon. There ain't much danger of her dancing a hole in your floor this some time."

CHAPTER XXIV.

SWEEPING AND DUSTING.

GREAT preparations were making all Saturday and Monday for the expected gathering. From morning till night Miss Fortune was in a perpetual bustle. The great oven was heated no less than three several times on Saturday alone. Ellen could hear the breaking of eggs in the buttery, and the sound of beating or whisking for a long time together; and then Miss Fortune would come out with floury

hands, and plates of empty egg-shells made their appearance. But Ellen saw no more. Whenever the coals were swept out of the oven, and Miss Fortune had made sure that the heat was just right for her purposes, Ellen was sent out of the way, and when she got back, there was nothing to be seen but the fast-shut oven door.

As she could neither help nor look on, the day passed rather wearily. She longed to go out again and see how the snow looked, but a fierce wind all the fore part of the day made it unfit for her. Towards the middle of the afternoon she saw with joy that it had lulled, and, though very cold, was so bright and calm that she might venture. She had eagerly opened the kitchen door to go up and get ready, when a long weary yawn from her old grandmother made her look back. The old lady had laid her knitting in her lap and bent her face down to her hand, which she was rubbing across her brow, as if to clear away the tired feeling that had settled there. Ellen's conscience instantly brought up Alice's words, "Can't you do something to pass away a tedious hour now and then?" As the words came back upon her memory, "A charge to keep I have," her mind was made up; after one moment's prayer for help and forgiveness, she shut the door, came back to the fire-place, and spoke in a cheerful tone,

"Grandma, wouldn't you like to have me read something to you?"

"Read!" answered the old lady. "Laws a me! I don't read nothing, deary."

"But wouldn't you like to have *me* read to you, grandma?"

The old lady in answer to this laid down her knitting, folded both arms round Ellen, and kissing her a great many times, declared she should like anything that came out of that sweet little mouth. As soon as she was set free Ellen brought her Bible, sat down close beside her, and read chapter after chapter; rewarded even then by seeing that, though her grandmother said nothing, she was listening with fixed attention, bending down over her knitting as if in earnest care to catch every word. And when at last she stopped, warned by certain noises downstairs that her aunt would presently be bustling in, the old lady again hugged her close to her bosom, kissing her forehead and cheeks and lips, and declaring that she was "a great deal sweeter than any sugar-plums;" and Ellen was very much surprised to feel her face wet with a tear from her grandmother's cheek. Hastily kissing her again (for the first time in her life), she ran out of the room, her own tears starting and her heart swelling big. "Oh

how much pleasure," she thought, "I might have given my poor grandma, and how I have let her alone all this while! How wrong I have been! But it shan't be so in future."

It was not quite sundown, and Ellen thought she might yet have two or three minutes in the open air; so she wrapped up very warm and went out to the chip-yard.

Ellen's heart was very light; she had just been fulfilling a duty that cost her a little self-denial, and the reward had already come. And now it seemed to her that she had never seen anything so perfectly beautiful as the scene before her—the brilliant snow that lay in a thick carpet over all the fields and hills, and the pale streaks of sunlight stretching across it between the long shadows that reached now from the barn to the house. Oh, how glorious! Ellen almost shouted to herself. It was too cold to stand still; she ran to the barn-yard to see the cows milked. And Mr. Van Brunt was very glad to see her there again, and Sam Larkins and Johnny Low looked as if they were too, and Ellen told them with great truth she was very glad indeed to be there; and then she went in to supper with Mr. Van Brunt and an amazing appetite.

That was Saturday. Sunday passed quietly, though Ellen could not help suspecting it was not entirely a day of rest to her aunt.

With Monday morning began a grand bustle, and Ellen was well enough now to come in for her share. The kitchen, parlour, hall, shed, and lower kitchen must all be thoroughly swept and dusted; this was given to her, and a morning's work pretty near she found it. Then she had to rub bright all the brass handles of the doors, and the big brass andirons in the parlour, and the brass candlesticks on the parlour mantelpiece. When at last she got through and came to the fire to warm herself, she found her grandfather lamenting that her snuff-box was empty, and asking her daughter to fill it for her.

"Oh! I can't be bothered to be running upstairs to fill snuff-boxes," answered that lady; "you'll have to wait."

"I'll get it, grandma," said Ellen, "if you'll tell me where."

"Sit down and be quiet!" said Miss Fortune. "You go into my room just when I bid you, and not till then."

"Never mind, deary; you'll read to grandma, won't you?"

It cost Ellen no effort now. With the beginning of kind offices to her poor old parent kind feeling had sprung up fast; instead of disliking and shunning she had begun to love her.

There was no dinner for anyone this day. Mr. and Mrs. Van Brunt

came to an early tea; after which Ellen was sent to dress herself, and Mr. Van Brunt to get some pieces of wood for the meat-choppers. He came back presently with an armful of square bits of wood, and sitting down before the fire, began to whittle the rough sawn ends over the hearth. His mother grew nervous. Miss Fortune bore it as she would have borne it from no one else, but vexation was gathering in her breast for the first occasion. Presently Ellen's voice was heard singing down the stairs.

"I'd give something to stop that child's pipe!" said Miss Fortune, "She's eternally singing the same thing over and over—something about 'a charge to keep.' I'd a good notion to give her a charge to keep this morning; it would have been to hold her tongue."

"That would have been a public loss, I think," said Mr. Van Brunt, gravely.

Just as Ellen came in, so did Nancy by the other door.

"What are you here for?" said Miss Fortune, with an ireful face.

"Oh, come to see the folks and get some peaches," said Nancy; "come to help along, to be sure."

"Ain't your grandma coming?"

"No, ma'am, she ain't. I knew she wouldn't be of much use, so I thought I wouldn't ask her."

Miss Fortune immediately ordered her out. Half laughing, half serious, Nancy tried to keep her ground. But Miss Fortune was in no mood to hear parleying; she laid violent hands on the passive Nancy, and between pushing and pulling at last got her out and shut the door. Her next sudden move was to haul off her mother to bed. Ellen looked her sorrow at this, and Mr. Van Brunt whistled *his* thoughts; but that either made nothing, or made Miss Fortune more determined. Off she went with her old mother under her arm. While she was gone Ellen brought the broom to sweep up the hearth, but Mr. Van Brunt would not let her.

"No," said he, "it's more than you nor I can do. You know," said he, with a sly look, "we might sweep up the shavings into the wrong corner."

This entirely overset Ellen's gravity, and unluckily she could not get it back again, even though warned by Mrs. Van Brunt that her aunt was coming. Trying only made it worse, and Miss Fortune's entrance was but the signal for a fresh burst of hearty merriment. What she was laughing at was of course instantly asked, in no pleased

tone of voice. Ellen could not tell, and her silence and blushing only made her aunt more curious.

"Come, leave bothering her," said Mr. Van Brunt at last; "she was only laughing at some of my nonsense, and she won't tell on me."

"I wonder if you think I am as easy blinded as all that comes to?" said Miss Fortune, scornfully.

And Ellen saw that her aunt's displeasure was all gathered upon her for the evening. She was thinking of Alice's words and trying to arm herself with patience and gentleness, when the door opened, and in walked Nancy as demurely as if nobody had ever seen her before.

"Miss Fortune, granny sent me to tell you she is sorry she can't come to-night—she don't think it would do for her to be out so late,—she's a little touch of the rheumatics, she says."

"Very well," said Miss Fortune. "Now clear out!"

"You had better not say so, Miss Fortune—I'll do as much for you as any two of the rest,—see if I don't!"

"I don't care if you did as much as fifty!" said Miss Fortune, impatiently. "I won't have you here; so go, or I'll give you something to help you along."

Nancy saw she had no chance with Miss Fortune in her present humour, and went quickly out.

"I am very glad she isn't going to be here," thought Ellen. "But, poor thing! I dare say she is very much disappointed. And how sorry she will feel going back all that long, long way home! What if I should get her leave to stay? wouldn't it be a fine way of returning good for evil? But, oh dear! I don't want her here! But that's no matter."

The next minute Mr. Van Brunt was half startled by Ellen's hand on his shoulder, and the softest of whispers in his ear. He looked up very much surprised.

"Why, do *you* want her?" said he, likewise in a low tone.

"No," said Ellen, "but I know I should feel very sorry if I was in her place."

"Well!" said he, "*you* are a good-natured piece."

"Miss Fortune," said he presently, "if that mischievous girl comes in again I recommend you to let her stay."

"Why?"

"'Cause it's true what she said—she'll do you as much good as half-

a-dozen. She'll behave herself this evening, I'll engage, or if she don't I'll make her."

"She's too impudent to live! But I don't care—her grandmother is another sort,—but I guess she is gone by this time."

Ellen waited only till her aunt's back was turned. She slipped down stairs and out at the kitchen door, and ran up the slope to the fence of the chip-yard.

"Nancy—Nancy!"

"What?" said Nancy, wheeling about.

"If you go in now I guess Aunt Fortune will let you stay."

"What makes you think so?" said the other, surlily.

"'Cause Mr. Van Brunt was speaking to her about it. Go in and you'll see."

Nancy looked doubtfully at Ellen's face, and then ran hastily in. More slowly Ellen went back by the way she came. When she reached the upper kitchen she found Nancy as busy as possible—as much at home already as if she had been there all day; helping to set the table in the hall, and going to and fro between that and the buttery with an important face.

At last the supper was all set out in the hall so that it could very easily be brought into the parlour when the time came; the waiter, with the best cups and saucers, which always stood covered with a napkin on the table in the front room, was carried away; the great pile of wood in the parlour fireplace, built ever since morning, was kindled; all was in apple-pie order, and nothing was left but to sweep up the shavings that Mr. Van Brunt had made. This was done; and then Nancy seized hold of Ellen.

"Come along," said she, pulling her to the window,—“come along, and let us watch the folks come in.”

"But it isn't time for them to be here yet," said Ellen; “the fire is only just burning.”

"Fiddle-de-dee! they won't wait for the fire to burn, I can tell you. They'll be along directly, some of them. I wonder what Miss Fortune is thinking of,—that fire had ought to have been burning this long time ago, but they won't set to work till they all get here, that's one thing. It's such a bright night—we can see 'em first-rate. There—here they come—just as I told you—here's Mimy Lawson, the first one—if there's anybody I do despise it's Mimy Lawson.”

“Hush!” said Ellen. The door opened and the lady herself walked in followed by three others—large, tall women, muffled from

head to foot against the cold. The quiet kitchen was speedily changed into a scene of bustle. Loud talking and laughing—a vast deal of unrobing—pushing back and pulling up chairs on the hearth—and Nancy and Ellen running in and out of the room with countless wrappers, cloaks, shawls, comforters, hoods, mittens, and moccasins.

“What a precious muss it will be to get ‘em all their own things when they come to go away again,” said Nancy. “Throw ‘em all down there, Ellen, in that heap. Now, come quick—somebody else’ll be here directly.”

“Which is Miss Mimy?” said Ellen.

“That big ugly woman in a purple frock. The one next her is Kitty—the black-haired one is Mary, and t’other is Fanny. Ugh! don’t look at ‘em; I can’t bear ‘em. There’s Mr. Bob.”

“Mr. who?”

“Bob—Bob Lawson. He’s a precious small young man for such a big onc. There—go take his hat. Miss Fortune,” said Nancy, coming forward, “mayn’t the gentlemen take care of their own things in the stoop, or must the young ladies wait upon them too? t’other room won’t hold everything neither.”

This speech raised a general laugh, in the midst of which Mr. Bob carried his own hat and cloak into the shed as desired. Before Nancy had done chuckling came another arrival; a tall, lank gentleman, with one of those unhappy-shaped faces that are very broad at the eyes and very narrow across the chops, and having a particularly grave and dull expression. He was welcomed with such a shout of mingled laughter, greeting, and jesting, that the room was in a complete hurly-burly; and a plain-looking stout elderly lady, who had come in just behind him, was suffered to stand unnoticed.

“It’s Miss Janet,” whispered Nancy,—“Mr. Marshchalk’s aunt. Nobody wants to see her here; she’s one of your pious kind, and that’s a kind your aunt don’t take to.”

Instantly Ellen was at her side, offering gently to relieve her of hood and cloak, and with a tap on his arm drawing Mr. Van Brunt’s attention to the neglected person.

Quite touched by the respectful politeness of her manner, the old lady enquired of Miss Fortune as Ellen went off with a load of mufflers, “who was that sweet little thing?”

“It’s a kind of sweetmeats that is kept for company, Miss Janet,” replied Miss Fortune, with a darkened brow.

"She's too good for everyday use, that's a fact," remarked Mr. Van Brunt.

Miss Fortune coloured and tossed her head, and the company were for a moment still with surprise. Another arrival set them going again.

"Here come the Hitchcocks, Ellen," said Nancy. "Walk in, Miss Mary—walk in, Miss Jenny—Mr. Marshchalk has been here this great while."

Miss Mary Hitchcock was in nothing remarkable. Miss Jenny when her wrappers were taken off showed a neat little round figure, and a round face of very bright and good-humoured expression. It fastened Ellen's eye, till Nancy whispered her to look at Mr. Juniper Hitchcock, and that young gentleman entered dressed in the last style of elegance.

The kitchen was now one buzz of talk and good-humour. Ellen stood half smiling to herself to see the universal smile, when Nancy twitched her.

"Here's more coming—Cilly Dennison, I guess—no, it's too tall; *who* is it?"

But Ellen flung open the door with a half uttered scream and threw herself into the arms of Alice, and then led her in; her face full of such extreme joy that it was perhaps one reason why her aunt's wore a very doubtful air as she came forward. That could not stand however against the graceful politeness and pleasantness of Alice's greeting. Miss Fortune's brow smoothed, her voice cleared, she told Miss Humphreys she was very welcome, and she meant it. Clinging close to her friend as she went from one to another, Ellen was delighted to see that everyone echoed the welcome. Every face brightened at meeting hers, every eye softened, and Jenny Hitchcock even threw her arms round Alice and kissed her.

Ellen left now the window to Nancy and stood fast by her adopted sister, with a face of satisfaction it was pleasant to see, watching her very lips as they moved. Soon the door opened again, and various voices hailed the new-comer as "Jane," "Jany," and "Jane Huff." Mr. Bill Huff followed, a sturdy young man; quite as plain and hardly so sensible-looking, he was still more shining with good-nature.

Last, not least, came the Dennisons; it took Ellen some time to make up her mind about them. Miss Cilly, or Cecilia, was certainly very elegant indeed. Her dress was smart, and so was her figure

and her face was pretty ; and Ellen overheard one of the Lawsons whisper to Jenny Hitchcock that "there wasn't a greater lady in the land than Cilly Dennison." Her brother was very different ; tall and athletic, and rather handsome, *he* made no pretension to be a gentleman. He valued his fine farming and cattle a great deal higher than Juniper Hitchcock's gentility.

CHAPTER XXV.

SHOWING WHAT A NOISE A BEE CAN MAKE WHEN IT GETS INTO THE HOUSE.

AS the party were all gathered it was time to set to work. One party was despatched downstairs into the lower kitchen ; the others made a circle round the fire. Everyone was furnished with a sharp knife, and a basket of apples was given to each two or three. Now it would be hard to say whether talking or working went on best. Not faster moved the tongues than the fingers ; nor smoother went the knives than the flow of talk ; while there was a constant leaping of quarters of apples from the hands that had prepared them into the bowls, trays, or what not that stood on the hearth to receive them. Ellen had nothing to do ; her aunt had managed it so, though she would gladly have shared the work that looked so pretty and pleasant in other people's hands. Miss Fortune would not let her ; so she watched the rest, and amused herself as well as she could with hearing and seeing ; and standing between Alice and Jenny Hitchcock, she handed them the apples out of the basket as fast as they were ready for them. It was a pleasant evening that. Laughing and talking went on merrily ; stories were told ; anecdotes, gossip, jokes, passed from mouth to mouth ; and not one made himself so agreeable, or had so much to do with the life and pleasure of the party, as Alice. Ellen saw it, delighted. The pared apples kept dancing into the bowls and trays ; the baskets got empty surprisingly fast ; Nancy and Ellen had to run to the barrels in the shed again and again for fresh supplies.

"Most got through, Nancy ?" enquired Bob Lawson, as she was once more replenishing his basket. (Miss Fortune had gone downstairs.)

"Ha'n't begun to, Mr. Lawson. There's every bit as many to do as there was at your house t'other night."

"What on airth does she want with such a sight of 'em?" enquired Dan Dennison.

"Live on pies and apple-sass till next summer," suggested Mimy Lawson.

"That's the stuff for my money!" replied her brother; "taters and apple-sass is my sass in the winter."

"It's good those is easy got," said his sister Mary; "the sass is the most of the dinner to Bob most commonly."

"Are they fixing for more apple-sass downstairs?" Mr. Dennison went on rather dryly.

"No—hush!" said Juniper Hitchcock—"sassages!"

"Humph!" said Dan, as he speared up an apple out of the basket on the point of his knife, "ain't that something like what you call killing two—"

"Just that exactly," said Jenny Hitchcock, as Dan broke off short, and the mistress of the house walked in. "Ellen," she whispered, "don't you want to go downstairs and see when the folks are coming up to help us? And tell the doctor he must be spry, for we ain't agoing to get through in a hurry," she added, laughing.

"Which is the doctor, ma'am?"

"The doctor—Doctor Marshchalk—don't you know?"

"Is he a doctor?" said Alice.

"No, not exactly, I suppose, but he's just as good as the real. He's a natural knack at putting bones in their places and all that sort of thing. There was a man broke his leg horribly at Thirlwall the other day, and Gibson was out of the way, and Marshchalk set it, and did it famously they said. So go, Ellen, and bring us word what they are all about."

Mr. Van Brunt was head of the party in the kitchen. He stood at one end of the table, cutting with his huge knife the hard frozen pork into very thin slices, which the rest of the company took, and before they had time to thaw cut up into small dice on the little boards Mr. Van Brunt had prepared. As large a fire as the chimney would hold was built up and blazing finely; the room looked as cosy and bright as the one upstairs, and the people as busy and as talkative. They had less to do, however, or they had, been more smart, for they were drawing to the end of their chopping. Miss Janet no sooner spied Ellen standing in the chimney-corner than she called her to her side, kissed her, and talked to her a long time, and finally fumbling in her pocket brought forth an odd little three-cornered pin-cushion which

she gave her for a keepsake. Jane Huff and her brother also took kind notice of her; and Ellen began to think the world was full of nice people. About half-past eight the choppers went up and joined the company who were paring apples; the circle was a very large one now, and the buzz of tongues grew quite furious.

"What are you smiling at?" asked Alice of Ellen, who stood at her elbow.

"Oh, I don't know," said Ellen, smiling more broadly; and presently added, "they're all so kind to me."

"Who?"

"Oh, everybody—Miss Jenny, and Miss Jane Huff, and Miss Janet, and Mrs. Van Brunt, and Mr. Huff, they all speak so kindly and look so kindly at me. But it's very funny what a notion people have for kissing—I wish they hadn't—I've run away from three kisses already, and I'm so afraid somebody else will try next."

"You don't seem very bitterly displeased," said Alice, smiling.

"I am, though, I can't bear it," said Ellen, laughing and blushing. "There's Mr. Dennison caught me in the first place and tried to kiss me, but I tried so hard to get away I believe he saw I was really in good earnest and let me go. And just now, only think of it, while I was standing talking to Miss Jane Huff downstairs, her brother caught me and kissed me before I knew what he was going to do. I declare it's too bad!" said Ellen, rubbing her cheek very hard as if she would rub off the affront. "Hark! what was that?"

"What is that?" said somebody else, and instantly there was silence, broken again after a minute or two by the faint blast of a horn.

"It's old Father Swaim, I reckon," said Mr. Van Brunt. "I'll go fetch him in."

"Oh yes! bring him in—bring him in," was heard on all sides.

"What does he blow his horn for?" said Ellen, as Jenny stooped for her knife, which she had let fall.

"Oh, to let people know he's there, you know; did you never see Father Swaim?"

"No."

"La! he's the funniest old fellow. He goes round and round the country carrying the newspapers; and we get him to bring us our letters from the post-office, when there are any. He carries 'em in a pair of saddle-bags hanging across that old white horse of his; I don't think that horse will ever grow old, no more than his master; and in

summer he has a stick—so long—with a horse's tail tied to the end of it, to brush away the flies, for the poor horse has had *his* tail cut off pretty short. I wonder if it isn't the very same," said Jenny, laughing heartily; "Father Swain thought he could manage it best, I guess."

Just then the door opened and Mr. Van Brunt and the old news-carrier came in.

He was a venerable, mild-looking old man, with thin hair as white as snow. He wore a long snuff-coloured coat, and a broad-brimmed hat, the sides of which were oddly looped up to the crown with twine; his tin horn or trumpet was in his hand. His saddle-bags were on Mr. Van Brunt's arm. As soon as she saw him Ellen was fevered with the notion that perhaps he had something for her, and she forgot everything else. It would seem that the rest of the company had the same hope, for they crowded round him shouting out welcomes and questions and enquiries for letters, all in a breath.

"Softly, softly," said the old man, sitting down slowly; "not all at once; I can't attend to you all at once; one at a time—one at a time."

"Don't attend to 'em at all till your ready," said Miss Fortune; "let 'em wait." And she handed him a glass of cider.

He drank it off at a breath, smacking his lips as he gave back the glass to her hand, and exclaiming, "That's prime!" Then taking up his saddle-bags from the floor, he began slowly to undo the fastenings.

"You are going to our house to-night, ain't you, Father Swain?" said Jennie.

"That's where I *was* going," said the old man; "I *was* agoing to stop with your father, Miss Jenny; but since I've got into farmer Van Brunt's hands, I don't know any more what's going to become of me; and after that glass of cider I don't much care! Now, let's see, let's see—" Miss Jenny Hitchcock, here's something for you. I should like very much to know what's inside of that letter, there's a blue seal to it. Ah, young folks! young folks!"

Jenny received her letter amidst a great deal of laughing and joking, and seemed herself quite as much amused as anybody.

"Jedediah B. Lawson,"—that's for your father, Miss Mimy; that saves me a long tramp, if you've twenty-one cents in your pocket, that is; if you ha'n't, I shall be obleeged to tramp after that. Here's something for 'most all of you, I'm thinking. Miss Cecilia Dennison,

your fair hands—how's the Squire?' rheumatism, eh? I think I'm a younger man now than your father, Cecilly; and yet I must ha' seen a good many years more than Squire Dennison; I must surely. 'Miss Fortune Emerson,' that's for you; a double letter, ma'am."

Ellen with a beating heart had pressed nearer and nearer to the old man, till she stood close by his right hand, and could see every letter as he handed it out. A spot of deepening red was on each cheek as her eyes eagerly scanned letter after letter; it spread to a sudden flush when the last name was read. Alice watched in some anxiety her keen look as it followed the letter from the old man's hand to her aunt's, and thence to the pocket, where Miss Fortune coolly bestowed it. Ellen could not stand this; she sprang forward across the circle.

"Aunt Fortune, there's a letter inside of that for me—won't you give it to me?—won't you give it to me?" she repeated, trembling.

Her aunt did not notice her by so much as a look; she turned away and began talking to someone else. The red had left Ellen's face when Alice could see it again;—it was livid and spotted from stifled passion. She stood in a kind of maze. But as her eyes caught Alice's anxious and sorrowful look she covered her face with her hands and as quick as possible made her escape out of the room.

For some minutes Alice heard none of the hubbub around her. Then came a knock at the door, and the voice of Thomas Grimés saying to Mr. Van Brunt that Miss Humphreys' horse was there.

"Mr. Swain," said Alice rising, "I don't like to leave you with these gay friends of ours; you'll stand no chance of rest with them to-night. Will you ride home with me?"

Many of the party began to beg Alice would stay to supper, but she said her father would be uneasy. The old-news-carrier concluded to go with her, for he said "there was a pint he wanted to mention to Parson Humphreys that he had forgotten to bring for'ard when they were talking on that 'ere subject two months ago." So Nancy brought her things from the next room and helped her on with them, and looked pleased, as well she might, at the smile and kind words with which she was rewarded. Alice lingered at her leave-taking, hoping to see Ellen; but it was not till the last moment that Ellen came in. She did not say a word; but the two little arms were put around Alice's neck and held her with a long, close earnestness which did not pass from her mind all the evening afterward.

When she was gone the company sat down again to business, and

apple-paring went on more steadily than ever for a while, till the bottom of the barrels was seen, and the last basketful of apples was duly emptied. Then there was a general shout; the kitchen was quickly cleared, and everybody's face brightened, as much as to say, "Now for fun!" While Ellen and Nancy and Miss Fortune and Mrs. Van Brunt were running all ways with trays, pans, baskets, knives, and buckets, the fun began by Mr. Juniper Hitchcock's whistling in his dog and setting him to do various feats for the amusement of the company. There followed such a rushing, leaping, barking, laughing, and scolding, on the part of the dog and his admirers, that the room was in an uproar. He jumped over a stick; he got into a chair and sat up on two legs; he kissed the ladies' hands; he suffered an apple-paring to be laid across his nose, then threw it up with a jerk and caught it in his mouth. Nothing very remarkable certainly, but, as Miss Fortune observed to somebody, "if he had been the learned pig there couldn't ha' been more fuss made over him."

Ellen stood looking on, smiling partly at the dog and his master and partly at the antics of the company. Presently Mr. Van Brunt bending down to her, said -

"What is the matter with your eyes?"

"Nothing," said Ellen starting - "at least nothing that's any matter, I meant."

"Come here," said he, drawing her on one side, "tell me all about it - what is the matter?"

"Never mind—please don't ask me, Mr. Van Brunt. I ought not to tell you—it isn't any matter."

But her eyes were full again, and he still held her fast doubtfully.

"I'll tell you all about it, Mr. Van Brunt," said Nancy as she came past them, "you let her go and I'll tell you by-and-by."

And Ellen tried in vain afterwards to make her promise she would not.

"Come, June," said Miss Jenny, "we have got enough of you and Jumper—turn him out; we are going to have the cat now. Come!—Puss, puss in the corner! go off in t'other room, will you, everybody that don't want to play. Puss, puss!"

Now the fun began in good earnest, and few minutes had passed before Ellen was laughing with all her heart, as if she never had had anything to cry for in her life. After "puss, puss in the corner" came "blind-man's-buff"; and this was played with great spirit, the two

most distinguished being Nancy and Dan Dennison, though Miss Fortune played admirably well. When this had lasted a while there was a general call for "the fox and the goose," and Miss Fortune was pitched upon for the latter; she having in the other game showed herself capable of good generalship. But who for the fox? Mr. Van Brunt.

"Not I," said Mr. Van Brunt,—"there ain't nothing of the fox about me; Miss Fortune would beat me all hollow."

"Who, then, farmer?" said Bill Huff; "come, who is the fox? Will I do?"

"Not you, Bill; the goose 'ud be too much for you."

There was a general shout and cries of "who then?" "who then?"

"Dan Dennison," said Mr. Van Brunt. "Now look out for a sharp fight."

Amidst a great deal of laughing and confusion the line was formed, each person taking hold of a handkerchief or band passed round the waist of the person before him, except when the women held by each other's skirts. They were ranged according to height, the tallest being next their leader, the "goose." Mr. Van Brunt and the elder ladies, and two or three more, chose to be lookers-on, and took post outside the door.

Mr. Dennison was a cunning fox, as well as a bold one. Sometimes, when they thought him quite safe, held at bay by the goose, he dived under or leaped over her outstretched arms, and almost snatched hold of little Ellen, who being the least was the last one of the party. But Ellen played very well, and just escaped him two or three times, till he declared she gave him so much trouble that when he caught her he would "kiss her the worst kind." Ellen played none the worse for that; however, she was caught at last and kissed too; there was no help for it; so she bore it as well as she could. Then she watched and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks to see how the fox and the goose dodged each other, what tricks were played, and how the long train pulled each other about. At length Nancy was caught; and then Jenny Hitchcock; and then Cecilia Dennison; and then Jane Huff; and so on, till at last the fox and the goose had a long struggle for Mimy Lawson, which would never have come to an end if Mimy had not gone over to the enemy.

There was a general pause. The hot and tired company were seated round the room, panting and fanning themselves with their pocket-handkerchiefs, and speaking in broken sentences; glad to rest

even from laughing. Miss Fortune had thrown herself down on a seat close by Ellen, when Nancy came up and softly asked, "Is it time to beat the eggs now?" Miss Fortune nodded, and then drew her close to receive a long whisper in her ear, at the end of which Nancy ran off.

"Is there anything I can do, Aunt Fortune?" said Ellen, so gently and timidly that it ought to have won a kind answer.

"Yes," said her aunt, "you may go and put yourself to bed; it's high time long ago." And looking round as she moved off she added "Go!"—with a little nod that as much as said, "I am in earnest."

Ellen's heart throbbed; she stood doubtful. One word to Mr. Van Brunt and she need not go, that she knew. But as surely, too, that word would make trouble and do harm. And then she remembered, "A charge to keep I have!" She turned quick and quitted the room.

Ellen sat down on the first stair she came to, for her bosom was heaving up and down, and she was determined not to cry. The sounds of talking and laughing came to her ear from the parlour, and there at her side stood the covered up supper; for a few minutes it was hard work to keep her resolve. The thick breath came and went very fast. Through the fan-lights of the hall door, opposite to which she was sitting, the bright moonlight streamed in; and presently, as Ellen quieted, it seemed to her fancy like a gentle messenger from its Maker, bidding His child remember Him; and then came up some words in her memory that her mother's lips had fastened there long ago: "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me." She remembered her mother had told her it is Jesus who says this. Her lost pleasure was well nigh forgotten; and yet as she sat gazing into the moonlight Ellen's eyes were gathering tears very fast.

"Well, I *am* seeking Him," she thought; "can it be that He loves me! Oh, I'm so glad!"

And they were glad tears that little Ellen wiped away as she went upstairs; for it was too cold to sit there long, if the moon was ever so bright.

She had her hand on the latch of the door when her grandmother called out from the other room to know who was there.

"It's I, grandma?"

"Come in here, deary," said the old woman in a lower tone; "what is it all? what's the matter? who's downstairs?"

"It's a bee, grandma; there's nothing the matter."

"Dear me!" said the old lady, "I oughtn't to ha' been a-bed! Why ha'n't Fortune told me? I'll get right up." Ellen, you go in that fur closet and bring me my paddysoy that hangs there, and then help me on with my things; I'll get right up. Dear me! what was Fortune thinking about?"

The moonlight served very well instead of candles. After twice bringing the wrong dresses Ellen at last hit upon the "paddysoy," which the old lady knew immediately by the touch. In haste, and not without some fear and trembling on Ellen's part, she was arrayed in it; her best cap put on, not over hair in the best order Ellen feared, but the old lady would not stay to have it made better; Ellen took care of her down the stairs, and after opening the door for her went back to her room.

A little while had passed, and Ellen was just tying her night-cap strings and ready to go peacefully to sleep, when Nancy burst in.

"Ellen! hurry! you must come right downstairs."

"Downstairs! why, I am just ready to go to bed."

"No matter, you must come right away down. There's Mr. Van Brunt says he won't begin supper till you come."

"But does Aunt Fortune know?"

"Yes, I tell you! and the quicker you come the better she'll be pleased. She sent me after you in all sorts of a hurry. She said she didn't know where you was."

"Said she didn't know where I was! Why, she told me herself to—"

Ellen began and stopped short.

"Of course!" said Nancy, "don't you think I know that. But *he* don't, and if you want to plague her you'll just tell him. Now, come and be quick, will you? The supper's splendid."

Ellen lost the first view of the table, for everything had begun to be pulled to pieces before she came in. The company were all crowded round the table, eating, and talking, and helping themselves. One dish in the middle of the big table had won the praise of every tongue; nobody could guess and many asked how it was made, but Miss Fortune kept a satisfied silence, pleased to see the constant stream of comers to the big dish till it was near empty. Just then, Mr. Van Brunt, seeing Ellen had nothing, gathered up all that was left and gave it to her.

It was sweet and cold and rich. Ellen told her mother afterwards it was the best thing she had ever tasted except the ice-cream she

once gave her in New York. She had taken, however, but one spoonful when her eye fell upon Nancy, standing back of all the company, and forgotten. Nancy had been upon her good behaviour all the evening, and it was a singular proof of this that she had not pushed in and helped herself among the first. Ellen's eye went once or twice from her plate to Nancy, and then she crossed over and offered it to her. It was eagerly taken, and a little disappointed Ellen stepped back again. But she soon forgot the disappointment. "She'll know now that I don't bear her any grudge," she thought.

"Hain't you got nothing?" said Nancy, coming up presently; "that wasn't your'n that you gave me, was it?"

Ellen nodded smilingly.

"Why, didn't you like it?"

"Yes, very much."

"Why, you're a queer little fish," said Nancy. "What did you get Mr. Van Brunt to let me in for?"

"How did you know I did?"

"'Cause he told me. Say—what did you do it for? Did you want me to stay?"

"Never mind," said Ellen; "don't ask me any questions."

"Yes, but I will though, and you've got to answer me. Why did you? Come! do you like me?—say."

"I should like you, I dare say, if you would be different."

"Well, I don't care," said Nancy, after a little pause, "I like *you*, though you're as queer as can be. I don't care whether you like me or not. Look here, Ellen, *that* cake there is the best, I know it is, for I've tried 'em all. You know I told Van Brunt I would tell him what you were crying about?"

"Yes, and I asked you not. Did you?"

Nancy nodded, being at the moment still further engaged in "trying" the cake.

"I am sorry you did. What did he say?"

"He didn't say much to *me*—somebody else will hear it, I guess. He *was* mad about it, or I am mistaken. What makes you sorry?"

"It will only do harm and make Aunt Fortune angry."

"Well, that's just what I should like if I were you. I can't make you out."

"I'd a great deal rather have her like me," said Ellen. "Was she vexed when grandma came down?"

"I don't know, but she had to keep it to herself if she *was*; every-

body else was so glád, and Mr. Van Brunt made such a fuss. Just look at the old lady, how pleased she is. I declare, if the folks ain't talking of going. Come, Ellen, now for the cloaks! you and me'll finish our supper afterwards."

That, however, was not to be. Nancy was offered a ride home to Mrs. Van Brunt's and a lodging there. They were ready cloaked and shawled, and Ellen was still hunting for Miss Janet's things in the moonlit hall, when she heard Nancy close by, in a lower tone than common, say—

"Ellen, will you kiss me?"

Ellen dropped her armful of things, and taking Nancy's hands, gave her truly the kiss of peace.

When she went up to undress for the second time, she found on her bed—her letter! And with tears Ellen kneeled down and gave earnest thanks for this blessing, and that she had been able to gain Nancy's goodwill.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SUNDRY THINGS ROUND A POT OF CHOCOLATE.

IT was Tuesday, the 22nd of December, and late in the day. The grey snow-clouds hung low; the air was keen and raw. It was already growing dark, and Alice was sitting alone in the firelight, when two little feet came running round the corner of the house; the glass door opened, and Ellen rushed in.

"I have come! I have come!" she exclaimed. "Oh, dear Alice! I'm so glad!"

So was Alice, if her kiss meant anything.

"But how late, my child! how late you are."

"Oh, I thought I never was going to get done," said Ellen, pulling off her things in a great hurry, and throwing them on the sofa; "but I am here at last. Oh, I am so glad!"

"Why, what has been the matter?" said Alice, folding up what Ellen laid down.

"Oh, a great deal of matter. I shan't want to see any more apples all winter. What do you think I have been about all to-day, dear Miss Alice?"

"Nothing that has done you much harm," said Alice, smiling, "if I am to guess from your looks. You are as rosy as a good Spitzenberg yourself."

"That's very funny," said Ellen, laughing, "for Aunt Fortune said awhile ago that my cheeks were just the colour of two mealy potatoes."

"But about the apples?" said Alice.

"Why, this morning I was thinking I would come here so early, when the first thing I knew Aunt Fortune brought out all those heaps and heaps of apples into the kitchen, and made me sit down on the floor, and then she gave me a great big needle, and set me to stringing them all together, and as fast as I strung them, she hung them up all round the ceiling. I tried very hard to get through before, but I could not, and I am so tired! I thought I never *should* get to the bottom of that big basket."

"Never mind, love; come to the fire; we'll try and forget all disagreeable things while we are together."

"I have forgotten it almost already," said Ellen, as she sat down in Alice's lap, and laid her face against hers; "I don't care for it at all now."

But her cheeks were fast fading into the uncomfortable colour Miss Fortune had spoken of; and weariness and weakness kept her for awhile quiet in Alice's arms, overcoming even the pleasure of talking. They sat so till the clock struck half-past five; then Alice proposed they should go into the kitchen and see Margery, and order the tea made, which she had no doubt Ellen wanted. Margery said she would put the tea to draw, and they should have it in a very few minutes.

"But, Miss Alice, there's an Irish body out by, waiting to speak to you. I was just coming in to tell you; will you please to see her now?"

"Certainly; let her come in. Is she in the cold, Margery?"

"No, Miss Alice; there's a fire there this evening. I'll call her."

The woman came up from the lower kitchen at the summons. She was young, rather pretty, and with a pleasant countenance, but unwashed, uncombed, untidy. The unfailing Irish cloak was drawn about her, the hood brought over her head, and on the head and shoulders the snow lay white, not yet melted away.

"Did you wish to speak to me, my friend?" said Alice, pleasantly.

"If ye please, ma'am, it's the master I'm wanting," said the woman, dropping a curtesy.

"My father? Margery, will you tell him?"

Margery departed.

"Come near the fire," said Alice, "and sit down; my father will be here presently. It is snowing again, is it not?"

"It is, ma'am; a bitter storm."

"Have you come far?"

"It's a good bit, my lady; it's more nor a mile beyant Carra, just right forin the ould big hill they call the Catchback; in Jemmy Morrison's woods, where Pat M'Farren's clearing is; it's there I live, my lady."

"That is a long distance, indeed, for a walk in the snow," said Alice, kindly; "sit down and come nearer the fire. Margery will give you something to refresh you."

"I thank ye, my lady, but I want nothing man can give me the night; and when one's on an arrant of life and death, it's little the cold or the storm can do to put out the heart's fire."

"Life and death? who is sick?"

"It's my own child, ma'am; my own boy; all the child I have; and I'll have none by the morning light."

"Is he so ill?" said Alice; "what is the matter with him?"

"Myself doesn't know."

The voice was fainter; the brown cloak was drawn over her face; and Alice and Ellen saw her shoulders heaving with the grief she kept from bursting out.

"Sit down," said Alice again presently; "sit down and rest; my father will be here directly. Margery,—oh, that's right; a cup of tea will do her good. What do you want with my father?"

"The Lord bless ye! I'll tell you, my lady."

She drank off the tea, but refused something more substantial that Margery offered her.

"My lady, there wasn't a stronger, nor a prettier, nor a swater child, nor couldn't be, nor he was when we left it; it'll be three years come the fiftenth of April next; but I'm thinking the bitter winters o' this cowl'd country has chilled the life out o' him, and trouble's cowl'd than all," she added in a lower tone. "I seed him grow waker an' waker, an' his daar face grow thinner an' thinner, and the red all left it; only two burning spots was on it some days; an' I worried the life out o' me for him, an' all I could do, I couldn't do nothing at all to help him, but he just growed waker an' waker. I axed the father wouldn't he see the doctor about him; but he's an'asy kind o' man, my lady, an' he said he would, an' he never did to this day: and John, he always said it was no use sending for the doctor, an' looked so swate at

me, an' said for me not to fret, for sure he'd be better soon, or he'd go to a better place. An' I thought he was like a heavenly angel itself already, an' always was, but then more nor ever. Och ! it's soon that he'll be one enjirely, let Father Shannon say what he will."

She sobbed for a minute, while Alice and Ellen looked on, silent and pitying.

"An' to-night, my lady, he's very bad," she went on, wiping away the tears that came quickly again ; "an' I seed he was going fast from me, an' I was breaking my heart wid the loss of him, whin I heard one of the men that was in it say, 'What's this he's saying?' says he. 'An' what is it thin?' says I. 'About the jantleman who praaches at Carra,' says he ; 'he's a calling for him,' says he. I knowed there wasn't a praast at all at Carra, an' I thought he was draaming or out o' his head, or crazy wid his sickness, like ; an' I went up close to him, an' says I, 'John,' says I, 'what is it you want?' says I ; 'an' sure if it's anything in heaven above or in earth beneath that yer own mother can get for ye,' says I, 'ye shall have it,' says I. An' he put up his two arms to my neck, an' pulled my face down to his lips, that was hot wid the fever, an' kissed me, he did ; an' says he, 'Mother, daar,' says he, 'if you love me,' says he, 'fetch me the good jantleman that praaches at Carra till I spake to him.' 'Is it the praast you want, John, my boy?' says I ; 'sure he's in it,' says I ; for Michael had been for Father Shannon, an' he had come home wid him half an hour before. 'Oh no, mother,' says he, 'it's not him at all that I maan ; it's the jantleman that spakes in the little white church at Carra : he's not a praast at all,' says he. 'An' who is he thin?' says I, getting up from the bed, 'or where will I find him, or how will I get to him?' 'Ye'll not stir a fut for him thin the night, Kitty Dolan,' says my husband ; 'are ye mad?' says he ; 'sure it's not his own head the child has at all at all, or it's a little hiritic he is,' says he ; 'an' ye won't show the disrespect to the praast in yer own house.' 'I'm maaning none,' says I ; 'nor more he isn't a hiritic ; but if he was, he's a born angel to Michael Dolan anyhow,' says I ; 'an' wid the kiss of his lips on my face wouldn't I do the arrant of my own boy, an' he a dying? by the blessing an' I will, if twenty men stood between me an' it. So tell me where I'll find him, this praast, if there's the love o' mercy in any sowl o' ye,' says I. But they wouldn't spake a word for me, not one of them, so I axed an axed at one place an' other, till here I am. An' now, my lady, will the master go for me to my poor boy? for he'd maybe dead while I stand here."

"Surely I will," said Mr. Humphreys, who had come in while she was speaking. "Wait but one moment."

In a moment he came back ready, and he and the woman set forth to their walk. Alice looked out anxiously after them.

"It storms very hard," she said, "and he has not had his tea! But he couldn't wait. Come, Ellen, love, we'll have ours. How will he ever get back again! it will be so deep by that time."

There was a cloud on her fair brow for a few minutes, but it passed away, and quiet and calm as ever she sat down at the little tea-table with Ellen.

After tea Alice took out her work, and Ellen put herself contentedly down on the rug, and sat leaning back against her.

"I had such a funny dream last night," said Ellen, presently.

"Did you? what about?"

"It was pleasant too," said Ellen, twisting herself round to talk,—
"but very queer. I dreamed about that gentleman who was so kind to me on board the boat—you know?—I told you about him."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, I dreamed of seeing him somewhere, I don't know where, and he didn't look a bit like himself, only I knew who it was; and I thought I didn't like to speak to him for fear he wouldn't know *me*, but then I thought he did, and came up and took my hand, and seemed so glad to see me; and he asked me if I had been *pious* since he saw me."

Ellen stopped to laugh.

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him, yes. And then I thought he seemed so very pleased."

"Dreamers do not always keep close to the truth, it seems."

"I didn't," said Ellen. "But then I thought I had, in my dreams."

"Had what? kept close to the truth?"

"No, no;—been what he said."

"Dreams are queer things," said Alice.

"I have been far enough from being good to-day," said Ellen, thoughtfully.

"How so, my dear?"

"I don't know, Miss Alice—because I never *am* good, I suppose."

"But what has been the matter to-day?"

"Why, those apples. I thought I would come here so early, and then when I found I must do all those baskets of apples first I *was* very ill-humoured; and Aunt Fortune saw I was, and said something

that made me worse. And I tried as hard as I could to get through before dinner, and when I found I couldn't I said I wouldn't come to dinner, but she made me, and that vexed me more, and I wouldn't eat scarcely anything, and then when I got back to the apples again I sewed so hard that I ran the needle into my finger ever so far,—see there! what a mark it left!—and Aunt Fortune said it served me right and she was glad of it, and that made me angry. I knew I was wrong afterwards, and I was very sorry. Isn't it strange, dear Althe, I should do so when I have resolved so hard I wouldn't?"

"Not very, my darling, so long as we have such evil hearts as ours are—it is strange they should be so evil."

"I told Aunt Fortune afterwards I was sorry, but she said 'actions speak louder than words, and words are cheap.' If she only wouldn't say that just as she does! it does worry me so."

"Patience!" said Alice, passing her hand over Ellen's hair, as she sat looking sorrowfully up at her; "you must try not to give her occasion. Never mind what she says, and overcome evil with good."

"That is just what mamma said!" exclaimed Ellen, rising to throw her arms round Alice's neck, and kissing her with all the energy of love, gratitude, repentance, and sorrowful recollection.

"Oh, what do you think!" she said, suddenly, her face changing again,—“I got my letter last night!”

"Your letter!"

"Yes, the letter the old man brought—don't you know? and it was written on the ship, and there was only a little bit from mamma, and a little bit from papa, but so good! Papa says she is a great deal better, and he has no doubt he will bring her back in the spring or summer quite well again. •Isn't that good?"

"Very good, dear Ellen. I am very glad for you."

"It was on my bed last night. I can't think how it got there,—and I don't care either, so long as I have got it. What are you making?"

"A purse," said Alice, laying it on the table for her inspection.

"It will be very pretty. Is the other end to be like this?"

"Yes, and these tassels to finish them off."

"Oh, that's beautiful," said Ellen, laying them down to try the effect; "and these rings to fasten it with. Is it black?"

"No, dark green. I am making it for my brother John."

"A Christmas present?" exclaimed Ellen.

"I am afraid not he will hardly be here by that time. It may do for New Year."

"How pleasant it must be to make Christmas and New Year presents!" said Ellen, after she had watched Alice's busy fingers for a few minutes. "I wish I could make something for somebody. Oh, I wonder if I couldn't make something for Mr. Van Brunt! Oh, I should like to very much."

Alice smiled at Ellen's very wide-open eyes.

"What could you make for him?"

"I don't know—that's the thing. He keeps his money in his pocket—and besides, I don't know how to make purses."

"There are other things besides purses. How would a watch-guard do? Does he wear a watch?"

"I don't know whether he does or not; he doesn't every day, I am sure, but I don't know about Sundays."

"Then we won't venture upon that. You might knit him a nightcap."

"A nightcap!—you're joking, Alice, aren't you? I don't think a nightcap would be pretty for a Christmas present, do you?"

"Well, what shall we do, Ellen?" said Alice, laughing. "I made a pocket-pincushion for papa once when I was a little girl, but I fancy Mr. Van Brunt would not know exactly what use to make of such a convenience. I don't think you could fail to please him though, with anything you should hit upon."

"I have got a collar," said Ellen, "to buy stuff with; it came in my letter last night. If I only knew what!"

"I have some nice pieces of fine linen," said Alice; "suppose I cut out a collar for him, and you can make it and stitch it, and then Margery will starch and iron it for you, all ready to give to him. How will that do? Can you stitch well enough?"

"Oh, yes, I guess I can," said Ellen. "Oh, thank you, dear Alice! you are the best help that ever was. Will he like that, do you think?"

"I am sure he will very much."

"Then that will do nicely," said Ellen, much relieved. "And now, what do you think about Nancy's Bible?"

"Nothing could be better, only that I am afraid Nancy would either sell it for something else, or let it go to destruction very quickly. I never heard of her spending five minutes over a book, and the Bible, I am afraid, last of all."

"But I think," said Ellen, slowly, "I think she would not spoil it or sell it either if I gave it to her."

And she told Alice about Nancy's asking for the kiss last night.

"That's the most hopeful thing I have heard about Nancy for a long time," said Alice. "We will get her the Bible by all means, my dear—a nice one—and I hope you will be able to persuade her to read it."

She rose as she spoke and went to the glass door. Ellen followed her, and they looked out into the night. It was very dark. She opened the door a moment, but the wind drove the snow into their faces, and they were glad to shut it again.

"How weary papa will be," said Alice, "he has had nothing to eat since dinner. I'll tell you what we'll do, Ellen," she exclaimed as she threw her work down, "we'll make some chocolate for him—that'd be the very thing. Ellen, dear, run into the kitchen and ask Margery to bring me the little chocolate pot, and a pitcher of night's milk."

Margery brought them. The pot was set on the coals, and Alice had cut up the chocolate that it might melt the quicker. Ellen watched it with great interest, till it was melted, and the boiling water was stirred in, and the whole was simmering quietly on the coals.

With Margery and the chocolate pot the cat had walked in. Ellen immediately tried to improve his acquaintance; that was not so easy. The Captain chose the corner of the rug furthest from her, in spite of all her calling and coaxing, paying her no more attention than if he had not heard her. Ellen crossed over to him and began most tenderly and respectfully to stroke his head and back, touching his soft hair with great care. Parry presently lifted up his head uneasily, as much as to say, "I wonder how long this is going to last?" and finding there was every prospect of its lasting some time, he fairly got up and walked to the other end of the rug. Ellen followed him and tried again, with exactly the same effect.

"Well, cat! you aren't very kind," said she at length; "Alice, he won't let me have anything to do with him!"

"He don't know you yet, and truth is, Parry has no fancy for extending the circle of his acquaintance. Oh, kitty, kitty!" said Alice, fondly stroking his head, "why don't you behave better?"

Parry lifted his head, and opened and shut his eyes, with an expression of great satisfaction very different from that he had bestowed on Ellen. Ellen gave him up for the present as a hopeless case, and turned her attention to the chocolate, which had now

received the milk and must be watched lest it should run over, which Alice said it would very easily do when once it began to boil again. At last the chocolate began to gather a rich froth, and Ellen called out,

"Oh, Alice, look here quick! here's the shape of the spoon on the top of the chocolate! do look at it."

An iron spoon was in the pot, and its shape was distinctly raised on the smooth frothy surface. As they were both bending forward to watch it, Alice waiting to take the pot off the moment it began to boil, Ellen heard a slight click of the lock of the door, and turning her head was a little startled to see a stranger there, standing still at the far end of the room. She touched Alice's arm without looking round. But Alice started to her feet with a slight scream, and in another minute had thrown her arms round the stranger and was locked in his. Ellen knew what it meant now very well. She turned away as if she had nothing to do with what was going on there, and lifted the pot of chocolate off the fire with infinite difficulty; but it was going to boil over, and she would have broken her back rather than not do it. And then she stood with her back to the brother and sister, looking into the fire, as if she was determined not to see them till she couldn't help it. But what she was thinking of Ellen could not have told, then or afterward. It was but a few minutes, though it seemed to her a great many, before they drew near the fire. Curiosity began to be strong, and she looked round to see if the new-comer was like Alice. No, not a bit, how different!—darker hair and eyes—not a bit like her; handsome enough, too, to be her brother. And Alice did not look like herself; her usually calm sweet face was quivering and sparkling now, lit up as Ellen had never seen it, oh, how bright! Poor Ellen herself had never looked duller in her life; and when Alice said, gaily, "This is my brother, Ellen,"—her confusion of thoughts and feelings resolved themselves into a flood of tears; she sprang and hid her face in Alice's arms.

"Come, Ellen," whispered Alice, presently, "look up! what kind of a welcome is this? come! we have no business with tears just now,—won't you run into the kitchen for me, love," she added more low, "and ask Margery to bring some bread and butter, and anything else she has that is fit for a traveller?"

Glad of an escape, Ellen darted away that her wet face might not be seen. The brother and sister were busily talking when she returned.

"John," said Alice, "this is my little sister that I wrote to you about—Ellen Montgomery. Ellen, this is your brother as well as mine, you know."

"Stop! stop!" said her brother. "Miss Ellen, this sister of mine is giving us away to each other at a great rate,—I should like to know first what you say to it. Are you willing to take a strange brother upon her recommendation?"

Half inclined to laugh, Ellen glanced at the speaker's face, but meeting the grave though somewhat comical look of two very keen eyes, she looked down again, and merely answered, "Yes."

"Then if I am to be your brother you must give me a brother's right, you know," said he, drawing her gently towards him, and kissing her gravely on the lips.

Probably Ellen thought there was a difference between John Humphreys and Mr. Van Brunt, or the young gentlemen of the apple-paring; for though she coloured a good deal, she made no objection and showed no displeasure. She watched him whenever she could without being noticed. At first she was in doubt what to think of him; she was quite sure from that one look into his eyes that he was a person to be feared; there was no doubt of that; as to the rest she didn't know.

"And what have my two sisters been doing to spend the evening?" said John Humphreys, one time that Alice was gone into the kitchen on some kind errand for him.

"Talking, sir," said Ellen, doubtfully.

"Talking! this whole evening? Alice must have improved. What have you been talking about?"

"Hares, and dogs, and about Mr. Cowper, and some other things——"

"Private affairs, eh?" said he, with again the look Ellen had seen before.

"Yes, sir," said Ellen, nodding and laughing.

"How came you to be talking about Mr. Cowper?"

"I was reading about his hares, and about John Gilpin; and then Alice told me about Mr. Cowper and his friends."

"Well, I don't know after all that you have had a pleasanter evening than I have had," said her questioner, "though I have been riding hard, with the cold wind in my face, and the driving snow doing all it could to discomfort me. I have had this very bright fireside before me all the way."

He fell into a fit of grave musing, which lasted till Alice came in. Then suddenly fell a fumbling in his pocket.

"Here's a note for you," said he, throwing it into her lap.

"A note!—Sophia Marshman!—where did you get it?"

"From her own hand. Passing there to-day, I thought I must stop a moment to speak to them, and had no notion of doing more; but Mrs. Marshman was very kind, and Miss Sophia in despair, so the end of it was I dismounted and went in to await the preparing of that billet, while my poor nag was led off to the stables, and a fresh horse supplied me. I fancy that tells you on what conditions."

"Charming!" said Alice, "to spend Christmas,—I am very glad; I should like to very much—with you, dear. If I can only get papa—but I think he will; it will do him a great deal of good. To-morrow, she says, we must come; but I doubt the weather will not let us; we shall see."

"I rode Prince Charlie down. He is a good traveller, and the sleighing will be fine if the snow be not too deep. The old sleigh is in being yet, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes! in good order. Ellen, what are you looking so grave about? you are going too."

"I!" said Ellen, a great spot of crimson coming in each cheek.

"To be sure; do you think I am going to leave you behind?"

"But——"

"But what?"

"There won't be room."

"Room in the sleigh? Then we'll put John on Prince Charlie, and let him ride there postilion-fashion."

"But—Mr. Humphreys?"

"He always goes on horseback; he will ride Sharp or old John."

In great delight Ellen gave Alice an earnest kiss; and then they all gathered round the table to take their chocolate, or rather to see John take his, which his sister would not let him wait for any longer. The storm had ceased, and through the broken clouds the moon and stars were looking out, so they were no more uneasy for Mr. Humphreys, and expected him every moment. Still, the supper was begun and ended without him, and they had drawn round the fire again before his welcome step was at last heard.

There was new joy then; new embracing, and questioning and answering; the little circle opened to let him in; and Alice brought the corner of the table to his side, and poured him out a cup of hot

chocolate. But after drinking half of it, and neglecting the catables beside him, he sat with one hand in the other, his arm leaning on his knee, with a kind of softened gravity upon his countenance.

"Is your chocolate right, papa?" said Alice, at length.

"Very good, my daughter!"

He finished the cup, but then went back to his old attitude and look. Gradually they ceased their conversation, and waited with respectful affection and some curiosity for him to speak; something of more than common interest seemed to be in his thoughts. He sat looking earnestly in the fire, sometimes with almost a smile on his face, and gently striking one hand in the palm of the other. And sitting so, without moving or stirring his eyes, he said at last, as though the words had been forced from him, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

He pressed his lips thoughtfully together while he stirred his chocolate; but having drunk it, he pushed the table from him, and drew up his chair.

"You had a long way to go, papa," observed Alice, again.

"Yes, a long way there; I don't know what it was coming home; I never thought of it. How independent the spirit can be of externals! I scarcely felt the storm to-night."

"Nbr I," said his son.

"I had a long way to go," said Mr. Humpkys; "that poor woman—that Mrs. Dolan—she lives in the woods behind the Cat's Back, a mile beyond Carra-carra, or more—it seemed a long mile to-night; and a more miserable place I never saw yet. A little rickety shanty, the storm was hardly kept out of it, and no appearance of comfort or nicety anywhere or in anything. There were several men gathered round the fire, and in a corner, on a miserable kind of bed, I saw the sick child. His eye met mine the moment I went in, and I thought I had seen him before, but couldn't at first make out where. Do you remember, Alice, a little ragged boy, with a remarkably bright pleasant face, who has planted himself regularly every Sunday morning for some time past in the south aisle of the church, and stood there all service time?"

Alice said, "No."

"I have noticed him often, and noticed him as paying a most fixed and steady attention. I have repeatedly tried to catch him on his way out of church, to speak to him, but always failed. I asked him to-night, when I first went in, if he knew me. 'I do, sir,' he said. I

asked him where he had seen me. He said, 'In the church beyant.' 'So,' said I, 'you are the little boy I have seen there so regularly; what did you come there for?'

"'To hear yer honour spake the good words.'"

"'What good words?' said I; 'about what?'

"He said, 'About Him that was skain, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'

"'And do you think He has washed away yours?' I said."

"He smiled at me very expressively. I suppose it was somewhat difficult for him to speak; and to tell the truth so it was for me, for I was taken by surprise; but the people in the hut had gathered round, and I wished to hear him say more, for their sake as well as my own. I asked him why he thought his sins were washed away. He gave me for answer part of the verse, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,' but did not finish it. 'Do you think you are very sick, John?' I asked.

"'I am, sir,' he said. 'I'll not be long here.'"

"'And where do you think you are going, then?' said I.

"He lifted one little thin bony arm from under his coverlid, and through all the dirt and pallor of his face the smile of heaven, I am sure, was on it, as he looked and pointed upward and answered, 'Jesus!'

"I asked him presently, as soon as I could, what he had wished to see me for. I don't know whether he heard me or not; he lay with his eyes half closed, breathing with difficulty. I doubted whether he would speak again; and, indeed, for myself, I had heard and seen enough to satisfy me entirely; for the sake of the group around the bed I could have desired something further. They kept perfect stillness; awed, I think, by a profession of faith such as they had never heard before. They and I stood watching him, and at the end of a few minutes, not more than ten or fifteen, he opened his eyes, and with sudden life and strength rose up half way in bed, exclaiming, 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!'—and then fell back—just dead."

The old gentleman's voice was husky as he finished, for Alice and Ellen were both weeping, and John Humphreys had covered his face with his hands.

"I have felt," said the old gentleman, presently, "as if I could have shouted out his words—his dying words—all the way as I came home. My little girl," said he, drawing Ellen to him, "do you know the

meaning of those sweet things of which little John Dolan's mind was so full?"

Ellen did not speak.

"Do you know what it is to be a sinner? and what it is to be a forgiven child of God?"

"I believe I do, sir," Ellen said.

He kissed her forehead and blessed her; and then said, "Let us pray."

It was late; the servants had gone to bed, and they were alone. Oh, what a thanksgiving Mr. Humphreys poured forth for that "unspeakable gift"; that they, everyone there, had been made to know and rejoice in it; for the poor little boy, rich in faith, who had just gone home in the same rejoicing; for their own loved one who was there already; and for the hope of joining them soon in safety and joy, to sing with them the "new song" for ever and ever.

There were no dry eyes in the room. And when they arose Mr. Humphreys, after giving his daughter the usual kisses for good-night, gave one to Ellen too, which he had never done before, and then going to his son and laying both hands on his shoulders, kissed his cheek also; then silently took his candle and went.

They lingered a little while after he was gone, standing round the fire as if loth to part, but in grave silence, each busy with his own thoughts. Alice's ended by fixing on her brother, for laying her hand and her head carelessly on his shoulder, she said, "And so you have been well all this time, John?"

He turned his face towards her without speaking, but Ellen, as well as his sister, saw the look of love with which he answered her question, rather of endearment than enquiry; and from that minute Ellen's mind was made up as to the doubt that had troubled her. She went to bed quite satisfied that her new brother was a decided acquisition.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JINGLING OF SLEIGH-BELLS.

BEFORE Ellen's eyes were open the next morning, almost before she awoke, the thought of the Christmas visit, the sleigh-ride, John Humphreys, and the weather, all rushed into her mind at once, and roused her half up in the bed to look out of the window. Well frosted

the panes of glass were, but at the corners and edges unmistakable bright gleams of light came in.

"Oh, Alice, it's beautiful!" exclaimed Ellen; "look how the sun is shining! and 'tisn't very cold. Are we going to-day?"

"I don't know yet, Ellic, but we shall know very soon. We'll settle that at breakfast."

At breakfast it was settled. They were to go, and set off directly. Mr. Humphreys could not go with them, because he had promised to bury little John Dolan; the priest had declared *he* would have nothing to do with it; and the poor mother had applied to Mr. Humphreys as being the clergyman her child had most trusted and loved to hear. Mr. Humphreys, therefore, must stay at home that day. He promised, however, to follow them the next, and would by no means permit them to wait for him.

So the little travelling-bag was stuffed with more things than it seemed possible to get into it. Ellen was afraid it never would be locked. By dint of much pushing and crowding, however, locked it was; and they made themselves ready. Over Ellen's merino dress and coat went an old fur tippet; a little shawl was tied round her neck; her feet were cased in a pair of warm moccasins, which belonging to Margery were of course a world too big for her, but "anything but cold," as their owner said. Her nice blue hood would protect her head well, and Alice gave her a green veil to save her eyes from the glare of the snow. When Ellen shuffled out of Alice's room in this trim, John gave her one of his grave looks, and saying she looked like Mother Bunch, begged to know how she expected to get to the sleigh; he said she would want a *footman*, indeed, to wait upon her, to pick up her slippers, if she went in that fashion. However, he ended by picking *her* up, carried her and set her safely down in the sleigh. Alice followed, and in another minute they were off.

Ellen's delight was unbounded. Presently they turned round a corner and left the house behind out of sight; and they were speeding away along a road that was quite new to her. Ellen's heart felt like dancing for joy. Nobody would have thought it, she sat so still and quiet between Alice and her brother; but her eyes were very bright as they looked joyously about her, and every now and then she could not help smiling to herself. Nothing was wanting to the pleasure of that ride.

Their road at first was through a fine undulating country like that between the Nose and Thirlwall; farmhouses and patches of woodland

scattered here and there. It would seem that the minds of all the party were full of the same thoughts, for after a very long silence Alice's first word, almost sigh, was—

"This is a beautiful world, John?"

"Beautiful!—wherever you can escape from the signs of man's presence and influence."

"Isn't that almost too strong?" said Alice.

He shook his head, smiling somewhat sadly, and touched Prince Charlie, who was indulging himself in a walk.

"But there are bright exceptions," said Alice.

"I believe it; never so much as when I come home."

"Are there none around you, then, in whom you can have confidence and sympathy?"

He shook his head again. "Not enough, Alice. I long for you every day of my life."

Alice turned her head quickly away.

"It must be so, my dear sister," he said, presently; "we can never expect to find it otherwise. There are, as you say, bright exceptions,—many of them; but in almost all I find some sad want. We must wait till we join the spirits of the just made perfect before we see society that will be all we wish for."

"What is Ellen thinking of all this while?" said Alice, presently, bending down to see her face. "As grave as a judge!—what are you musing about?"

"I was thinking," said Ellen, "how men could help the world's being beautiful."

"Don't trouble your little head with that question," said John, smiling; "long may it be before you are able to answer it. Look at those snowbirds!"

By degrees the day wore on. About one o'clock they stopped at a farmhouse to let the horse rest, and to stretch their own limbs, which Ellen for her part was very glad to do. The people of the house received them with great hospitality and offered them pumpkin pies and sweet cider. Alice had brought a basket of sandwiches, and Prince Charlie was furnished with a bag of corn. Thomas had stowed away in the sleigh for him; so they were all well refreshed and rested and warmed before they set off again.

It was drawing towards four o'clock when Alice with some difficulty roused Ellen from a long sleep to see the approach to the house and get wide awake before they should reach it. They turned from the

road and entered by a gateway into some pleasure-grounds, through which a short drive brought them to the house. It might have looked dreary, but that some well-grown evergreens were clustered round it, and others scattered here and there relieved the eye; a few holly bushes, singly and in groups, proudly displayed their bright dark leaves and red berries; and one unrivalled hemlock on the west threw its graceful shadow quite across the lawn, on which, as on itself, the white chimney-tops, and the naked branches of oaks and elms, was the faint smile of the afternoon sun.

A servant came to take the horse, and Ellen, being first rid of her moccasins, went with John and Alice up the broad flight of steps and into the house. They entered a large handsome square hall with a blue and white stone floor, at one side of which the staircase went winding up. Here they were met by a young lady, very lively and pleasant-faced, who threw her arms round Alice and kissed her a great many times, seeming very glad indeed to see her. She welcomed Ellen too with such warmth that she began to feel almost as if she had been sent for and expected, told Mr. John he had behaved admirably, and then led them into a large room where was a group of ladies and gentlemen.

The welcome they got here was less lively but quite as kind. Mr. and Mrs. Marshman were fine handsome old people, of stately presence, and most dignified as well as kind in their deportment. Ellen saw that Alice was at home here, as if she had been a daughter of the family. Mrs. Marshman also stooped down and kissed herself, telling her she was very glad she had come, and that there were a number of young people there who would be much pleased to have her help them keep Christmas.

The children had all gone out to walk, and as they had had their dinner a great while ago it was decided that Ellen should take hers that day with the elder part of the family. While they were waiting to be called to dinner and everybody else was talking and laughing, old Mr. Marshman took notice of little Ellen, and drawing her from Alice's side to his own, began a long conversation. By the time the butler came to say dinner was ready she had almost forgotten she was a stranger. Mr. Marshman himself led her to the dining-room, begging the elder ladies would excuse him, but he felt bound to give his attention to the greatest stranger in the company. He placed her on his right hand and took the greatest care of her all dinner-time; once sending her plate the whole length of the table for some particular little thing he thought she would like.

Dinner gave place to the dessert, and that in its turn was removed with the cloth. Ellen was engaged in munching almonds and raisins, admiring the brightness of the mahogany, and the richly cut and coloured glass, and silver decanter stands, which were reflected in it, when a door at the further end of the room half opened, a little figure came partly in, and holding the door in her hand stood looking doubtfully along the table, as if seeking for someone.

"What is the matter, Ellen?" said Mrs. Chauncey.

"Mrs. Bland told me, mamma——" she began, her eye not ceasing its uneasy quest, but then breaking off and springing to Alice's side she threw her arms around her neck, and gave her certainly the warmest of all the warm welcomes she had had that day.

"Hallo!" cried Mr. Marshman, tapping on the table; "that's too much for anyone's share. Come here, you baggage, and give me just such another."

The little girl came near accordingly and hugged and kissed him with a very good will, remarking, however, "Ah, but I've seen you before to-day, grandpapa!"

"Well, here's somebody you've not seen before," said he, good-humouredly, pulling her round to Ellen, "here's a new friend for you, a young lady from the great city, so you must brush up your country manners—Miss Ellen Montgomery come from—pshaw! what is it? come from——"

"London, grandpapa?" said the little girl, as with a mixture of simplicity and kindness she took Ellen's hand and kissed her on the cheek.

"From Carra-carra, sir," said Ellen, smiling.

"Go along with you," said he, laughing and pinching her cheek. "Take her away, Ellen, take her away, and mind you take good care of her. Tell Mrs. Bland she is one of grandpapa's guests."

The two children had not, however, reached the door when Ellen Chauncey exclaimed, "Wait, oh! wait a minute! I must speak to Aunt Sophia about the bag." And flying to her side there followed an earnest whispering, and then a nod and a smile from Aunt Sophia; and satisfied, Ellen returned to her companion and led her out of the dining-room.

"We have both got the same name," said she, as they went along a wide corridor; "how shall we know which is which?"

"Why," said Ellen, laughing, "when you say Ellen, I shall know you mean me, and when I say it you will know I mean you. I shouldn't be calling myself, you know."

"Yes, but when somebody else calls Ellen, we shall both have to run. Do you run when you are called?"

"Sometimes," said Ellen, laughing.

"Ah, but I do always; mamma always makes me. I thought perhaps you were like Marianne Gillespie—she waits often as much as half a minute before she stirs when anybody calls her."

The little speaker pushed open a door and led Ellen into the presence of a group of young people rather older than themselves.

"Marianne," said she to one of them, a handsome girl of fourteen, "this is Miss Ellen Montgomery—she came with Alice, and she is come to keep Christmas with us—are't you glad? There'll be quite a parcel of us when what's-her-name comes—won't there?"

Marianne shook hands with Ellen.

"She is one of grandpapa's guests, I can tell you," said little Ellen Chauncey; "and he says we must brush up our country manners—she's come from the great city."

"Do you think we are a set of ignoramuses, Miss Ellen?" enquired a well-grown boy of fifteen, who looked enough like Marianne Gillespie to prove him her brother.

"I don't know what that is," said Ellen.

"Well, do they do things better in the great city than we do here?"

"I don't know how you do them here," said Ellen.

"Don't you? Come; stand out of my way, right and left, all of you, will you, and give me a chance? Now then!"

Conscious that he was amusing most of the party, he placed himself gravely at a little distance from Ellen, and marching solemnly up to her bowed down to her knees—then slowly raising his head, stepped back.

"Miss Ellen Montgomery, I am rejoiced to have the pleasure of seeing you at Ventnor. Isn't that polite, now? Is that like what you have been accustomed to, Miss Montgomery?"

"No, sir, thank you," said Ellen, who laughed in spite of herself. The mirth of the others redoubled.

"May I request to be informed, then," continued Gillespie, "what is the fashion of making bows in the great city?"

"I don't know," said Ellen; "I never saw a boy make a bow before."

"Humph! I guess country manners will do for you," said William turning on his heel.

"You're giving her a pretty specimen of 'em, Bill," said another boy.

"For shame, William!" cried little Ellen Chauncey; "didn't I tell you she was one of grandpapa's guests? Come here, Ellen, I'll take you somewhere else!"

She seized Ellen's hand and pulled her towards the door, but suddenly stopped again.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you!" she said; "I asked Aunt Sophia about the bag of moroccos, and she said she would have 'em early to-morrow morning, and then we can divide 'em right away."

"We mustn't divide 'em till Maggie comes," said Marianne.

"Oh no, not till Maggie comes," said little Ellen; and then ran off again.

"I am so glad you are come," said she; "the others are all so much older, and they have all so much to do together—and now you can help me think what I will make for mamma. Hush! don't say a word about it!"

They entered the large drawing-room, where old and young were gathered for tea. The children, who had dined early, sat down to a well-spread table, at which Miss Sophia presided; the elder persons were standing or sitting in different parts of the room. Alice was sitting by Mrs. Marshman, talking with two other ladies; but Ellen smiled presently, as she caught her eye from the far end of the room, and got a little nod of recognition. John came up just then to set down his coffee-cup, and asked her what she was smiling at.

"That's city manners," said William Gillespie, "to laugh at what's going on."

"I have no doubt we shall all follow the example," said John Humphreys, gravely, "if the young gentleman will try to give us a smile."

The young gentleman had just accommodated himself with an outrageously large mouthful of bread and sweetmeats, and if ever so well-disposed, compliance with the request was impossible. None of the rest, however, not even his sister, could keep their countenances, for the eye of the speaker had pointed and sharpened his words; and William, very red in the face, was understood to mumble, as soon as mumbling was possible, that "he wouldn't laugh unless he had a mind to," and a threat to "do something" to his tormentor.

"Only not eat me," said John, with a shade of expression in his look and tone which overcame the whole party, himself and poor William alone retaining entire gravity.

"What's all this—what's all this? What's all this laughing about?" said old Mr. Marshman, looking up.

"This young gentleman, sir," said John, "has been endeavouring—with a mouthful of arguments—to prove to us the inferiority of city manners to those learned in the country."

"Will?" said the old gentleman, glancing doubtfully at William's discomfited face; then added sternly, "I don't care where your manners were learnt, sir, but I advise you to be very particular as to the sort you bring with you here. Now, Sophia, let us have some music."

He set the children a dancing, and as Ellen did not know how, he kept her by him, and kept her very much amused too, in his own way; then he would have her join in the dancing, and bade Ellen Chauncey give her lessons. There was a little backwardness at first, and then Ellen was jumping away with the rest, and thinking it perfectly delightful, as Miss Sophia's piano rattled out merry jigs and tunes, and little feet flew over the floor as light as the hearts they belonged to. At eight o'clock the young ones were dismissed, and bade good-night to their elders; and pleased with the kind kiss Mrs. Marshman had given to her as well as her little grand-daughter, Ellen went off to bed very happy.

The room to which her companion led her was the very picture of comfort. It was not too large, furnished with plain old-fashioned furniture, and lighted and warmed by a cheerful wood fire. The very old brass-headed andirons that stretched themselves out upon the hearth with such a look of being at home, seemed to say, "You have come to the right place for comfort." A little dark mahogany book-case in one place—an odd toilet-table of the same stuff in another; and opposite the fire an old-fashioned high post-bedstead with its handsome Marseilles quilt and ample pillows looked very tempting. Between this and the far side of the room, in the corner, another bed was spread on the floor.

"This is Aunt Sophia's room," said little Ellen Chauncey; "this is where you are to sleep."

"And where will Alice be?" said the other Ellen.

"Oh, she'll sleep here, in this bed, with Aunt Sophia; that is because the house is so full, you know; and here is your bed, here on the floor. Oh, delicious! I wish I was going to sleep here. Don't you love to sleep on the floor? I do. I think it's fun."

Anybody might have thought it fun to sleep on that bed, for inste-

of a bedstead it was luxuriously piled on mattresses. The two children sat down together on the foot of it.

"This is Aunt Sophia's room," continued little Ellen, "and next to it, out of that door, is our dressing-room, and next to that is where mamma and I sleep. Do you undress and dress yourself?"

"To be sure I do," said Ellen, "always."

"So do I; but Marianne Gillespie won't even put on her shoes and stockings for herself."

"Who does it, then?" said Ellen.

"Why, Lester—Aunt Matilda's maid. Mamma sent away her maid when we came here, and she says if she had fifty she would like me to do everything I can for myself. I shouldn't think it was pleasant to have anyone to put on one's shoes and stockings for you, should you?"

"No, indeed," said Ellen. "Then you live here all the time?"

"Oh, yes, ever since papa didn't come back from that long voyage—we live here since then."

"Is he coming back soon?"

"No," said little Ellen, gravely, "he never came back—he never will come back any more."

Ellen was sorry she had asked, and both children were silent for a minute.

"I'll tell you what!" said little Ellen, jumping up, "mamma said we mustn't sit up too long talking, so I'll run and get my things and bring 'em here, and we can undress together; won't that be a nice way?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SCRAPS—OF MOROCCO AND TALK.

LEFT alone in the strange room with the flickering fire, how quickly Ellen's thoughts left Ventnor and flew over the sea. They often travelled that road, it is true, but now perhaps the very home look of everything, where yet *she* was not at home, might have sent them. There was a bitter twinge or two, and for a minute Ellen's head drooped. "To-morrow will be Christmas eve—last Christmas eve—oh, mamma!"

Little Ellen Chauncey soon came back, and sitting down beside her on the foot of the bed, began the business of undressing.

"Don't you love Christmas-time?" said she. "I think it's the

pleasantest in all the year ; we always have a house full of people, and such fine times. But then in summer I think *that's* the pleasantest. I s'pose they're all pleasant. Do you hang up your stocking ?”

“No,” said Ellen.

“Don't you ? Why, I always did ever since I can remember. I used to think, when I was a little girl, you know,” said she, laughing, “I used to think that Santa Claus came down the chimney, and I used to hang up my stocking as near the fireplace as I could ; but I know better than that now ; I don't care where I hang it. You know who Santa Claus is, don't you ?”

“He's nobody,” said Ellen.

“Oh, yes, he is ; he's a great many people ; he's whoever gives you anything. *My* Santa Claus is mamma, and grandpapa, and grandmamma, and Aunt Sophia, and Aunt Matilda ; and I thought I should have had Uncle George too this Christmas, but he couldn't come. Uncle Howard never gives me anything. I am sorry Uncle George couldn't come ; I like him the best of all my uncles.”

“I never had anybody but mamma to give me presents,” said Ellen, “and she never gave me much more at Christmas than at other times.”

—“I used to have presents from mamma and grandpapa too, both Christmas and New Year ; but now I have grown so old, mamma only gives me something Christmas, and grandpapa only New Year. It would be too much, you know, for me to have both when my presents are so big. I don't believe a stocking would hold 'em much longer. But oh ! we've got such a fine plan in our heads,” said little Ellen, lowering her voice and speaking with open eyes and great energy ; “*we* are going to make presents this year—we children. Won't it be fine ? We are going to make what we like for anybody we choose, and let nobody know anything about it ; and then New Year's morning, you know ; when the things are all under the napkins, we will give ours to somebody to put where they belong, and nobody will know anything about them till they see them there. Won't it be fine ? I'm so glad you are here, for I want you to tell me what I shall make.”

“Who is it for,” said Ellen.

“Oh, mamma ; you know I can't make for everybody, so I think I had rather it should be for mamma. I *thought* of making her a needle-book with white backs, and getting Gilbert Gillespie to paint them—he can paint beautifully—and having her name and

thing else written very nicely inside. How do you think that would do?"

"I should think it would do very nicely," said Ellen—"very nicely indeed."

"I wish Uncle George was at home, though, to write it for me; he writes so beautifully; I can't do it well enough."

"I am afraid I can't either," said Ellen. "Perhaps somebody else can."

"I don't know who. Aunt Sophia scribbles and scratches, and besides, I don't want her to know anything about it. But there's another thing I don't know how to fix, and that's the edges of the leaves—the leaves for the needles; they must be fixed somehow."

"I can show you how to do that," said Ellen, brightening. "Mamma had a needle-book that was given to her that had the edges beautifully fixed; and I wanted to know how it was done, and she showed me. I'll show you that. It takes a good while, but that's no matter."

"Oh, thank you; how nice that is! Oh, no, that's no matter. And then it will do very well, won't it? Now, if I can only catch Gilbert in a good humour—he isn't my cousin, he's Marianne's cousin—that big boy you saw downstairs—he's so big he won't have anything to say to me sometimes—but I guess I'll get him to do this. Don't you to make something for somebody?"

Ellen *had* had one or two feverish thoughts on this subject since the beginning of the conversation; but she only said—

"It's no matter—you know I haven't got anything here; and besides, I shall not be here till New Year."

"Not here till New Year! yes, you shall," said little Ellen, throwing herself upon her neck; "indeed you aren't going away before that. I *know* you aren't; I heard grandma and Aunt Sophia talking about it. Say you will stay here till New Year—do!"

"I should like to very much indeed," said Ellen, "if Alice does."

In the midst of half-a-dozen kisses with which her little companion rewarded this speech, somebody close by said pleasantly—

"What time of night do you suppose it is?"

The girls started; there was Mrs. Chauncey.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed her little daughter, springing to her feet.

"I hope you haven't heard what we have been talking about?"

"Not a word," said Mrs. Chauncey, smiling; "but as to-morrow will be long enough to talk in, hadn't you better go to bed now?"

Her daughter obeyed her immediately, after one more hug to Ellen,

and telling her she was *so* glad she had come.' Mrs. Chauncey stayed to see Ellen in bed, and press one kind motherly kiss on her face, so tenderly that Ellen's eyes were moistened as she withdrew. But in her dreams that night the rosy sweet face, blue eyes, and little plump figure of Ellen Chauncey played the greatest part.

She slept till Alice was obliged to waken her the next morning, and then got up with her head in a charming confusion of pleasures past and pleasures to come—things known and unknown to be made for everybody's New Year presents—linen collars and painted needle-books; and no sooner was breakfast over than she was showing and explaining to Ellen Chauncey a particularly splendid and mysterious way of embroidering the edges of needle-book leaves. Deep in this they were still an hour afterwards, and in the comparative merits of purple and rose-colour, when a little hubbub arose at the other end of the room on the arrival of a new-comer. Ellen Chauncey looked up from her work, then dropped it, exclaiming, "There she is! now for the bag!" and pulled Ellen along with her towards the party. A young lady was in the midst of it, talking so fast that she had not time to take off her cloak and bonnet. As her eye met Ellen's, however, she came to a sudden pause. It was Margaret Dunscombe. Ellen's face certainly showed no pleasure; Margaret's darkened with a very disagreeable surprise.

"My goodness, Ellen Montgomery, how on earth did you get *here*?" said Margaret.

"Do you know her?" asked one of the girls, as the two Ellens went off after "Aunt Sophia."

"Do I know her? Yes, just enough—exactly. How did she get here?"

"Miss Humphreys brought her."

"Who's Miss Humphreys?"

"Did you never see her? She is here, or has been here, a great deal of the time. Grandma calls her her fourth daughter, and she is just as much at home as if she was; and she brought her here."

"And she's at home too, I suppose. Well, it's no business of mine."

"What do you know of her?"

"Oh, enough—that's just it—don't want to know any more."

"Well, you needn't; but what's the matter with her?"

"Oh, I don't know; I'll tell you some other time; she a conceited little piece. We had the care of her coming up the river, that's how

I come to know about her. Ma said it was the last child she would be bothered with in that way."

Presently the two girls came back, bringing word to clear the table, for Aunt Sophia was coming with the moroccos. As soon as she came Ellen Chauncey sprang to her neck and whispered an earnest question. "Certainly!" Aunt Sophia said, as she poured out the contents of the bag; and her little niece delightedly told Ellen *she* was to have her share as well as the rest.

The table was now strewn with pieces of morocco of all sizes and colours, which were hastily turned over and examined with eager hands and sparkling eyes. Some were mere scraps, to be sure; but others showed a breadth and length of beauty which was declared to be "first-rate," and "fine"; and one beautiful large piece of blue morocco in particular was made up in imagination by two or three of the party in as many different ways. Marianne wanted it for a book-cover; Margaret declared she could make a lovely reticule with it; and Ellen could not help thinking it would make a very pretty needle-box, such a one as she had seen in the possession of one of the girls, and longed to make for Alice.

"Well, what's to be done now?" said Miss Sophia, "or am I not to know?"

"Oh, you're not to know—you're not to know, Aunt Sophia," cried the girls; "you mustn't ask."

"Well, then, I'll take my departure," said Miss Sophia; "but how will you manage to divide all these scraps?"

"Suppose we were to put them in the bag again, and you hold the bag, and we were to draw them out without looking?" said Ellen Chauncey, "as we used to do with the sugar-plums."

As no better plan was thought of this was agreed upon; and little Ellen shutting her eyes very tight stuck in her hand and pulled out a little bit of green morocco about the size of a dollar. Ellen Montgomery came next; then Margaret, then Marianne; then their mutual friend Isabel Hawthorn. Each had to take her turn a great many times; and at the end of the drawing the pieces were found to be pretty equally divided among the party, with the exception of Ellen, who besides several other good pieces had drawn the famous blue.

"That will do very nicely," said little Ellen Chauncey; "I am glad you have got that, Ellen. Now, Aunt Sophia! one thing more—you know the silks and ribbons you promised us."

"Bless me! I haven't done yet, eh? Well, you shall have them,

but we are all going out to walk now; I'll give them to you this afternoon. Come! put these away and get on your bonnets and cloaks."

"A hard measure! but it was done. After the walk came dinner; after dinner Aunt Sophia had to be found and waited on, till she had fairly sought out and delivered to their hands the wished-for bundles of silks and satins. They gave great satisfaction.

"But how shall we do about dividing these?" said little Ellen, "shall we draw lots again?"

"No, Ellen," said Marianne, "that won't do, because we might everyone get just the things we do not want. I want one colour of stuff to go with my morocco, and you want another to go with yours; and you might get mine and I might get yours. We had best each choose in turn what we like, beginning at Isabel."

"Very well," said little Ellen, "I'm agreed."

But this business of choosing was found to be very long and very difficult, each one was so fearful of not taking the exact piece she wanted most.

"I declare it's too vexatious!" said Margaret Dunscombe; "here I've got this beautiful piece of blue satin, and can't do anything with it; it just matches that blue morocco—it's a perfect match—I could have made a splendid thing of it, and I have got some cord and tassels that would just do—I declare it's too bad."

Ellen's colour changed.

"Well, choose, Margaret," said Marianne.

"I don't know what to choose—that's the thing. What can one do with red and purple morocco and blue satin? I might as well give up. I've a great notion to take this piece of yellow satin and dress up a Turkish doll to frighten the next young one I meet with."

"Come, choose, Margaret," said Ellen Chauncey; "I dare say Ellen wants the blue morocco as much as you do."

"No, I don't!" said Ellen abruptly, throwing it over the table to her; "take it, Margaret, you may have it."

"What do you mean?" said the other, astounded.

"I mean you may have it," said Ellen, "I don't want it."

"Well, I'll tell you what," said the other, "I'll give you yellow satin for it—or some of my red morocco!"

"No, I had rather not," repeated Ellen; "I don't want it—you may have it."

"Very generously done," remarked Miss Sophia; "I hope you'll all take a lesson in the art of being obliging."

"Quite a noble little girl," said Mrs. Gillespie.

Ellen crimsoned. "No, ma'am, I am not, indeed," she said, looking at them with eyes that were filling fast, "please don't say so—I don't deserve it."

"I shall say what I think, my dear," said Mrs. Gillespie, smiling; "but I am glad you add the grace of modesty to that of generosity; it is the more uncommon of the two."

"I am not modest! I am not generous! you mustn't say so," cried Ellen. She struggled; the blood rushed to the surface, suffusing every particle of skin that could be seen; then left it, as with eyes cast down she went on—"I don't deserve to be praised; it was more Margaret's than mine. I oughtn't to have kept it at all, for I saw a little bit when I put my hand in. I didn't mean to, but I did!"

Raising her eyes hastily to Alice's face, they met those of John, who was standing behind her. She had not counted upon him for one of her listeners; she knew Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. Chauncey, Miss Sophia, and Alice had heard her, but this was the one drop too much. Her head sank; she covered her face a moment, and then made her escape out of the room before even Ellen could follow her.

There was a moment's silence. Alice seemed to have some difficulty not to follow Ellen's example. Margaret pouted; Mrs. Chauncey's eyes filled with tears, and her little daughter seemed divided between doubt and dismay. Her first move, however, was to run off in pursuit of Ellen. Alice went after her.

"Here's a beautiful example of honour and honesty for you!" said Margaret Dunscombe, at length.

"I think it is," said John, quietly.

"An uncommon instance," said Mrs. Chauncey.

"I am glad everybody thinks so," said Margaret, sullenly; "I hope I sha'n't copy it, that's all."

"I think you are in no danger," said John again.

"Very well," said Margaret, who between her desire of speaking and her desire of concealing her vexation did not know what to do with herself; "everybody must judge for himself, I suppose; I've got enough of her, for my part."

"Where did you ever see her before?" said Isabel Hawthorne.

"Oh, she came up the river with us—mamma had to take care of her—she was with us two days."

"And didn't you like her?"

"No, I guess I didn't! she was a perfect plague. All the day on

board the steamboat she scarcely came near us; we couldn't pretend to keep sight of her; mamma had to send her maid out to look after her I don't know how many times. She scraped acquaintance with some strange man on board and liked his company better than ours, for she stayed with him the whole blessed day, waking and sleeping; of course, mamma didn't like it at all. She didn't go to a single meal with us; you know, of course, that wasn't proper behaviour."

"No, indeed," said Isabel.

"I suppose," said John coolly, "she chose the society she thought the pleasantest. Probably Miss Margaret's politeness was more than she had been accustomed to."

Margaret coloured, not quite knowing what to make of the speaker or his speech.

"It would take much to make me believe," said gentle Mrs. Chauncey, "that a child of such refined and delicate feeling as that little girl evidently has, could take pleasure in improper company."

Margaret had a reply at her tongue's end, but she had also an uneasy feeling that there were eyes not far off too keen of sight to be baffled; she kept silence till the group dispersed, and she had an opportunity of whispering in Marianne's ear that "*that* was the very most disagreeable man she had ever seen in her life."

"What a singular fancy you have taken to this little pet of Alice's, Mr. John," said Mrs. Marshman's youngest daughter. "You quite surprise me."

"Did you think me a misanthrope, Miss Sophia?"

"Oh, no, not at all; but I always had a notion you would not be easily pleased in the choice of favourites."

"*Easily!* When a simple intelligent child of twelve or thirteen is a common character, then I will allow that I am easily pleased."

"Twelve or thirteen!" said Miss Sophia; "what are you thinking about? Alice says she is only ten or eleven."

"In years, perhaps."

"How gravely you take me up!" said the young lady, laughing. "My dear Mr. John, 'in years, perhaps,' you may call yourself twenty, but in everything else you might much better pass for thirty or forty."

As they were called to dinner, Alice and Ellen Chauncey came back; the former looking a little serious, the latter crying, and wishing aloud that all the moroccos had been in the fire. They had not been able to find Ellen, and a second search was made in vain. John went to

the library, which was separate from the other rooms, thinking she might have chosen that for a hiding-place. She was not there; but the pleasant light of the room, where only the fire was burning, invited a stay. He sat down in the deep window, and was musingly looking out into the moonlight, when the door softly opened, and Ellen came in. She stole in noiselessly, so that he did not hear her, and she thought the room empty; till in passing slowly down toward the fire, she came upon him in the window. Her start first let him know she was there; she would have run, but one of her hands was caught, and she could not get it away.

"Running away from your brother, Ellie!" said he, kindly; "what is the matter?"

Ellen shrunk from meeting his eye, and was silent.

"I know all, Ellie," said he, still very kindly; "I have seen all; why do you shun me?"

Ellen said nothing; the big tears began to run down her face and frock.

"You are taking this matter too hardly, dear Ellen," he said, drawing her close to him; "you did wrong, but you have done all you could to repair the wrong; neither man nor woman can do more than that."

But though encouraged by his manner, the tears flowed faster than ever.

"Where have you been? Alice was looking for you, and little Ellen Chauncey was in great trouble. I don't know what dreadful thing she thought you had done with yourself. Come! lift up your head and let me see you smile again."

Ellen lifted her head, but could not her eyes, though she tried to smile.

"I want to talk to you a little about this," said he. "You know you gave me leave to be your brother; will you let me ask you a question or two?"

"Oh, yes; whatever he pleased," Ellen said.

"Then sit down here," said he, making room for her on the wide window-seat, but still keeping hold of her hand, and speaking very gently. "You said you saw when you took the morocco; I don't quite understand; how was it?"

"Why," said Ellen, "we were not to look, and we had gone three times round, and nobody had got that large piece yet, and we all wanted it; and I did not mean to look at all, but I don't know how it

was, just before I shut my eyes, I happened to see the corner of it sticking up, and then I took it."

"With your eyes open?"

"No, no, with them shut. And I had scarcely got it when I was sorry for it, and wished it back."

"You will wonder at me, perhaps, Ellie," said John, "but I am not very sorry this has happened. You are no worse than before; it has only made you see what you are—very, very weak, quite unable to keep yourself right without constant help. Sudden temptation was too much for you; so it has many a time been for me, and so it has happened to the best men on earth. I suppose if you had had a minute's time to think, you would not have done as you did?"

"No, indeed," said Ellen, "I was sorry a minute after."

"And I dare say the thought of it weighed upon your mind ever since?"

"Oh, yes," said Ellen; "it wasn't out of my head a minute the whole day."

"Then let it make you very humble, dear Ellie, and let it make you in future keep close to our dear Saviour, without whose help we cannot stand a moment."

Ellen sobbed; and he allowed her to do so for a few minutes, then said, "But you have not been thinking much about Him, Ellie."

The sobs ceased; he saw his words had taken hold.

"Is it right," he said softly, "that we should be more troubled about what people will think of us, than for having displeased or dishonoured Him?"

Ellen now looked up, and in her look was all the answer he wished.

"You understand me, I see," said he. "Be humbled in the dust before Him; the more the better; but whenever we are greatly concerned, for our own sakes, about other people's opinion, we may be sure we are thinking too little of God and what will please Him."

"I am very sorry," said poor Ellen, from whose eyes the tears began to drop again; "I am very wrong, but I couldn't bear to think what Alice would think, and you, and all of them——"

"Here's Alice to speak for herself," said John.

As Alice came up with a quick step and knelt down before her Ellen sprang to her neck, and they held each other very fast indeed. John walked up and down the room. Presently he stopped before them.

"All's well again," said Alice, "and we are going in to tea."

He smiled and held out his hand, which Ellen took, but he would not leave the library, declaring they had a quarter of an hour still. So they sauntered up and down the long room, talking of different things so pleasantly that Ellen near forgot her troubles. Then came in Miss Sophia to find them, and then Mr. Marshman, and Marianne to call them to tea; so the going into the drawing-room was not half so bad as Ellen thought it would be.

CHAPTER XXIX.

STOCKINGS, TO WHICH THE "BAS BLEU" WAS NOTHING.

CHRISTMAS morning was dawning grey, but it was still far from broad daylight, when Ellen was awakened. She found little Ellen Chauncey pulling and pushing at her shoulders, and whispering, "Ellen! Ellen!" in a tone that showed a great fear of waking somebody up. There she was, in night-gown and night-cap, and barefooted too, with face brim-full of excitement, and as wide awake as possible. Ellen roused herself in no little surprise, and asked what the matter was.

"I am going to look at my stocking," whispered her visitor; "don't you want to get up and come with me? it's just here in the other room,—come! don't make any noise."

"But what if you should find nothing in it?" said Ellen, laughingly, as she bounded out of bed.

"Ah, but I shall, I know; I always do; never fear. Hush! step ever so softly; I don't want to wake anybody."

"It's hardly light enough for you to see," whispered Ellen, as the two little barefooted white figures glided out of the room.

"Oh, yes, it is; that's all the fun. Hush! don't make a bit of noise --I know where it hangs—mamma always puts it at the back of her big easy chair—come this way—here it is! Oh, Ellen, there's two of 'em! There's one for you! there's one for you."

In a tumult of delight one Ellen capered about the floor on the tips of her little bare toes, while the other, not less happy, stood still for pleasure. The dancer finished by hugging and kissing her with all her heart, declaring she was so glad she didn't know what to do.

"But how shall we know which is which?"

"Perhaps they are both alike," said Ellen.

"No—at any rate, one's for me, and t'other's for you. Step! here

are pieces of paper, with our names on I guess—let's turn the chair a little bit to the light—there—yes!—Ellen—M-o-n,—there, that's yours; my name doesn't begin with an M; and this is mine!"

Another caper round the room, and then she brought up in front of the chair where Ellen was still standing.

"I wonder what's in 'em?" she said; "I want to look, and I don't want to. Come, you begin."

"But that's no stocking of mine," said Ellen, a smile gradually breaking upon her sober little face; "my leg was never as big as that."

"Stuffed, isn't it?" said Ellen Chauncey. "Oh, do make haste, and see what is in yours. I want to know so I don't know what to do."

"Well, will you take out of yours as fast as I take out of mine?"

"Well!"

Oh, mysterious delight, and delightful mystery of the stuffed stocking! Ellen's trembling fingers sought the top, and then very suddenly left it.

"I can't think what it is," said she, laughing; "It feels so funny."

"Oh, never mind! make haste," said Ellen Chauncey; "it won't hurt you, I guess."

"No, it won't hurt me," said Ellen, "but——"

She drew forth a great bunch of white grapes.

"Splendid! isn't it?" said Ellen Chauncey. "Now for mine."

It was the counterpart of Ellen's bunch.

"So far, so good," said she. "Now for the next."

The next thing in each stocking was a large horn of sugar-plums.

"Well, that's fine, isn't it?" said Ellen Chauncey; "yours is tied with white ribbon and mine with blue; that's all the difference. Oh, and your paper's red and mine is purple. Come—what's next?"

Ellen drew out a little bundle, which being opened proved to be a nice little pair of dark kid gloves.

"Oh, I wonder who gave me this!" she said; "it's just what I wanted. How pretty! Oh, I am so glad. I guess who it was."

"Oh, look here," said the other Ellen, who had been diving into *her* stocking, "I've got a ball—this is just what I wanted, too. Isn't it funny we should each get just what we wanted? Oh, this is a very nice ball. I'm glad I have got it. Why, here is another great round thing in my stocking! what can it be? they wouldn't give me *two* balls," said she, chuckling.

"So there is in mine," said Ellen. "Maybe they're apples."

"They aren't, they wouldn't give us apples; besides, it is soft. Pull it out and see."

They were two great scarlet satin pincushions, with E. C. and E. M. very neatly stuck in pins.

"Well, we shan't want pins for a good while, shall we?" said Ellen. "Who gave us these?"

"I know," said little Ellen Chauncey; "Mrs. Bland."

"She was very kind to make one for me," said Ellen. "Now for the next!"

The next thing was a little bottle of Cologne-water.

"I can tell who put that in," said her friend; "Aunt Sophia. I know her little bottles of Cologne-water. Do you love Cologne-water? Aunt Sophia's is delicious."

Ellen did like it very much, and was extremely pleased. Ellen Chauncey had also a new pair of scissors, which gave entire satisfaction.

"Now, I wonder what all this toe is stuffed with?" said she; "raisins and almonds, I declare! and yours the same, isn't it? Well, don't you think we have got enough sweet things? Isn't this a pretty good Christmas?"

"What are you about, you monkeys?" cried the voice of Aunt Sophia from the dressing-room door. "Alice, Alice! do look at them. Come right back to bed both of you. Crazy pates! It is lucky it is Christmas day—if it was any other in the year we should have you both sick in bed; as it is, I suppose, you will go scot free."

Laughing and rosy with pleasure, they came back and got into bed together; and for an hour, afterwards the two kept up a most animated conversation, intermixed with long chuckles and bursts of merriment, and whispered communications of immense importance.

After breakfast Ellen applied secretly to Alice to know if she could write *very* beautifully; she exceedingly wanted something done.

"I should not like to venture, Ellie, if it must be so superfine: but John can do it for you."

"Can he? Do you think he would?"

"I am sure he will if you ask him."

"But I don't like to ask him," said Ellen, casting a doubtful glance at the window.

"Nonsense! he's only reading the newspaper. You won't disturb him."

Ellen accordingly went near and said gently, "Mr. Humphreys," but he did not seem to hear her. "Mr. Humphreys!"—a little louder.

"He has not arrived yet," said John, looking round gravely.

He spoke so gravely that Ellen could not tell whether he was joking or serious. Her face of extreme perplexity was too much for his command of countenance. "Who do you want to speak to?" said he, smiling.

"I wanted to speak to you, sir," said Ellen, "if you are not now too busy."

"*Mr. Humphreys* is always busy," said he, shaking his head; "but *Mr. John* can attend to you at any time, and *John* will do for you whatever you please to ask him."

"Then, Mr. John," said Ellen, laughing, "if you please, I wanted to ask you to do something for me very much indeed, if you are not too busy; Alice said I shouldn't disturb you."

"Not at all; I've been long enough over this stupid newspaper. What is it?"

"I want you, if you will be so good," said Ellen, "to write a little bit for me on something, very beautifully."

"Very beautifully!" Well—come to the library; we will see."

"But it is a great secret," said Ellen; "you won't tell anybody?"

"Tortures shan't draw it from me—when I know what it is," said he, with one of his comical looks.

In high glee Ellen ran for the pieces of Bristol board which were to form the backs of the needlebook, and brought them to the library; and explained how room was to be left in the middle of each for a painting, a rose on one, a butterfly on the other; the writing to be as elegant as possible, above, beneath, and roundabout, as the fancy of the writer should choose.

"Well, what is to be inscribed on this most original of needlebooks?" said John, as he carefully mended his pen.

"Stop!" said Ellen, "I'll tell you in a minute—on this one, the front, you know, is to go, 'To my dear mother, many happy New Years';—and on this side, 'From her dear little daughter, Ellen Chauncey.' You know," she added, "Mrs. Chauncey isn't to know anything about it till New Year's day; nor anybody else."

"Trust me," said John.

Breathlessly she looked on while the skilful pen did its work; and

her exclamations of delight and admiration when the first cover was handed to her were not loud but deep.

"It will do, then, will it? Now, let us see—'From her dear little daughter,' there—now, 'Ellen Chauncey,' I suppose, must be in hieroglyphics."

"In what?" said Ellen.

"I mean written in some difficult character."

"Yes," said Ellen.

"Is this all the business you had for my hands?" John asked after he had written the name.

"This is all; and I am *very* much obliged to you, Mr. John."

Her grateful affectionate eye said much more, and he felt well paid.

Gilbert was next applied to, to paint the rose and the butterfly, which, finding so excellent a beginning made in the work, he was very ready to do. The girls were then free to set about the embroidery of the leaves, which was by no means the business of an hour.

A very happy Christmas day was that. With their needles and thimbles, and rose-coloured silk, they kept by themselves in a corner, or in the library, out of the way; and sweetening their talk with a sugar-plum now and then, neither tongues nor needles knew any flagging.

Then came Mr. Humphreys; and Ellen was glad, both for her own sake and because she loved to see Alice pleased. Then came the great merry Christmas dinner, when the girls had not talked themselves out, but tired themselves with working. Young and old dined together to-day, and the children did not sit by themselves, but scattered among the grown-up people; and as Ellen was nicely placed between Alice and little Ellen Chauncey, she enjoyed it all very much. The large long table surrounded with happy faces; tones of cheerfulness and looks of kindness, and lively talk; the superb display of plate, and glass, and china; the stately dinner; and last but not least, the plum-pudding. There was sparkling wine, too, and a great deal of drinking of healths; but Ellen noticed that Alice and her brother smilingly drank all theirs in water; so when old Mr. Marshman called to her to "hold out her glass," she held it out to be sure and let him fill it, but she lifted her tumbler of water to her lips instead, after making him a very low bow. Mr. Marshman laughed at her a great deal, and asked her if she was "a proselyte to the new notions;" and Ellen laughed with him, without having the least idea what he meant, and was

extremely happy. It was very pleasant, too, when they went into the drawing-room to take coffee. The young ones were permitted to have coffee to-night as a great favour. O'd Mrs. Marshman had the two little ones on either side of her; and was so kind, and held Ellen's hand in her own, and talked to her about her mother, till Ellen loved her.

After tea there was a great call for games, and young and old joined in them. When they were well tired they sat down to rest and hear music, and Ellen enjoyed that exceedingly. Alice sang, and Mrs. Gillespie, and Miss Sophia, and another lady, and Mr. Howard; sometimes alone, sometimes three or four, or altogether.

At last came ten o'clock, and the young ones were sent off; and from beginning to end that had been a Christmas day of unbroken and unclouded pleasure. Ellen's last act was to take another look at her Cologne bottle, gloves, pin-cushion, grapes, and paper of sugar-plums, which were laid side by side carefully in a drawer.

CHAPTER XXX.

SUNDAY AT VENTNOR.

MR. HUMPHREYS was persuaded to stay over Sunday at Ventnor; and it was also settled that his children should not leave it till after New Year. This was less their own wish than his; he said Alice wanted the change, and he wished she looked a little fatter. Ellen was very glad of this, though there was one drawback to the pleasures of Ventnor,—she could not feel quite at home with any of the young people, but only Ellen Chauncey and her cousin George Walsh. This seemed very strange in her; she almost thought Margaret Dunscombe was at the bottom of it all, but she recollected she had felt something of this before Margaret came. She tried to think nothing about it; and in truth it was not able to prevent her from being very happy. The breach, however, was destined to grow wider.

About four miles from Ventnor was a large town called Randolph. Thither they drove to church Sunday morning, the whole family; but the hour of dinner and the distance prevented anyone from going in the afternoon. The members of the family were scattered in different parts of the house, most in their own room.

Ellen with some difficulty made her escape from her young companions, and went to look in the library for her friends. They were there, and alone; Alice half reclining on the sofa, half in her brother's arms; he was reading or talking to her; there was a book in his hand.

"Is anything the matter?" said Ellen, as she drew near; "aren't you well, dear Alice? Headache? oh, I am sorry. Oh! I know——"

She darted away. In two minutes she was back again with a pleased face, her bunch of grapes in one hand, her bottle of Cologne-water in the other.

"Won't you open that, please Mr. John?" said she; "I can't open it; I guess it will do her good, for Ellen says it's delicious. Mamma used to have Cologne-water for her headaches. And here, dear Alice, won't you eat these?—do!—try one."

"Hasn't that bottle been open yet?" said Alice, as she smilingly took a grape.

"Why, no, to be sure it hasn't. I wasn't going to open it till I wanted it. Eat them all, dear Alice, please do!"

"But I don't think you have eaten one yourself, Ellen, by the look of the bunch. And here are a great many too many for me."

"Yes, I have, I've eaten two; I don't want 'em. I give them all to you and Mr. John. I had a great deal rather!"

Ellen took, however, as precious payment Alice's look and kiss; and then with a delicate consciousness that perhaps the brother and sister might like to be alone, she left the library. She did not know where to go, for Miss Sophia was stretched on the bed in her room, and she did not want any company. At last with her little Bible she placed herself on the old sofa in the hall above stairs, which was perfectly well-warmed, and for some time she was left there in peace. But after half an hour or so, to her dismay she heard a door open, and the whole gang of children came trooping into the hall below, where they soon made such a noise that reading or thinking was out of the question.

"What a bother it is that one can't play games on a Sunday," said Marianne Gillespie.

"One *can* play games on a Sunday," answered her brother. "Where's the odds? It's all Sunday's good for, I think."

"William! William!" spouted the shocked voice of little Ellen unceasingly, "you're a real wicked boy!"

"Well, now!" said William, "how am I wicked? Now, say, I

should like to know. How is it any more wicked for us to play games than it is for Aunt Sophia to lie abed and sleep, or for Uncle Howard to read novels, or for grandpa to talk politics, or for mother to talk about the fashions?—there was she and Miss What's-her-name for ever so long this morning doing everything but *make* a dress. Now, which is the worst?"

"Oh, William! William! for shame! for shame!" said little Ellen, again.

"Do hush, Ellen Chauncey! will you?" said Marianné, sharply; "and you had better hush too, William, if you know what is good for yourself. I don't care whether it's right or wrong, I do get dolefully tired with doing nothing."

"Oh, so do I!" said Margaret, yawning. "I wish one could sleep all Sunday."

"I'll tell you what," said George, "I know a game we can play, and no harm, either, for it's all out of the Bible."

"Oh, do you? let's hear it, George," cried the girls.

"I don't believe it's good for anything if it's out of the Bible," said Margaret. "Now, stare, Ellen Chauncey, do!"

"I *ain't* staring," said Ellen, indignantly, "but I don't believe it is right to play it, if it *is* out of the Bible."

"Well, it is though," said George. "Now, listen; I'll think of somebody in the Bible, some man or woman, you know; and you may all ask me twenty question about him to see if you can find out who it is."

"What kind of questions?"

"Any kind of questions, whatever you like."

"That will improve your knowledge of Scripture history," said Gilbert.

"To be sure; and exercise our memory," said Isabel Hawthorn.

"Yes, and then we are thinking of good people and what they did all the time," said little Ellen.

"Or bad people and what they did," said William.

"But I don't know enough about people and things in the Bible," said Margaret; "I couldn't guess."

"Oh, never mind, it will be all the more fun," said George. "Come! let's begin. Who'll take somebody?"

"Oh, I think this will be fine!" said little Ellen Chauncey; "but Ellen—where's Ellen? we want her."

"No, we don't want her! we've enough without her; she won't

play!" shouted William, as the little girl ran upstairs. She persevered, however. Ellen had left her sofa before this, and was found seated on the foot of her bed. As far and as long as she could she withstood her little friend's entreaties, and very unwillingly at last yielded and went with her downstairs.

"Now we are ready," said little Ellen Chauncey; "I have told Ellen what the game is; who's going to begin?"

"We have begun," said William. "Gilbert has thought of somebody."

After a lot of guessing, the children gave up. Questioning seemed hopeless; and Gilbert at last told them his thought. It was Elcazar, Abraham's steward, whom he sent to fetch a wife for his son, Isaac.

"Why haven't *you* guessed, little mumchance?" said Gilbert to Ellen Montgomery.

"I have guessed," said Ellen; "I knew who it was some time ago."

"Then why didn't you say so? and you haven't asked a single question," said George.

"No, you haven't asked a single question," said Ellen Chauncey.

"She is a great deal too good for that," said William; "she thinks it is wicked, and that we are not at all nice proper-behaved boys and girls to be playing on Sunday; she is very sorry she could not help being amused."

"Do you think it is wicked, Ellen?" asked her little friend.

"Do you think it isn't right?" said George Walsh.

Ellen hesitated; she saw they were all waiting to hear what she would say. She coloured, and looked down at her little Bible which was still in her hand. It encouraged her.

"I don't want to say anything rude," she began; "I don't think it is quite right to play such plays, or any plays."

She was attacked with impatient cries of "Why not? Why not?"

"Because," said Ellen, trembling with the effort she made, "I think Sunday was meant to be spent in growing better and learning good things; and I don't think such plays would help one at all to do that; and I have a kind of *feeling* that I ought not to do it."

"Well, I hope you'll act according to your *feelings* then," said William; "I am sure nobody has any objection. You had better go somewhere else though, for we are going on; we have been learning to be good long enough for one day. Come! I have thought of somebody."

Ellen could not help feeling hurt and sorry at the half sneer she saw in the look and manner of the others as well as in William's words. She wished for no better than to go away, but as she did so her bosom swelled, and the tears started, and her breath came quicker. She found Alice lying down and asleep, Miss Sophia beside her; so she stole out again and went down to the library. Finding nobody, she took possession of the sofa and tried to read again; reading somehow did not go well, and she fell to musing on what had just passed. She thought of the unkindness of the children; how sure she was it was wrong to spend any part of Sunday in such games; what Alice would think of it, and John, and her mother; and how the Sundays long ago used to be spent, when that dear mother was with her; and then she wondered how *she* was passing this very one—while Ellen was sitting here in the library alone, what *she* was doing in that far-away land; and she thought if there only *were* such things as oracles that could tell truly, how much she would like to ask about her.

"Ellen!" said the voice of John from the window.

She started up; she had thought she was alone; but there he was lying in the window-seat.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Ellen.

"Come here. What are you thinking about? I didn't know you were there till I heard two or three very long sighs. What is the matter with my little sister?"

He took her hand and drew her fondly up to him. "What were you thinking about?"

"I was thinking about different things, nothing is the matter," said Ellen.

"Then what are those tears in your eyes for?"

"I don't know," said she, laughing, "there weren't any till I came here. I was thinking just now about mamma."

He said no more, still, however, keeping her beside him.

"I should think," said Ellen, presently, after a few minutes' musing, look out of the window, "it would be very pleasant if there were such things as oracles—don't you, Mr. John?"

"No."

"But wouldn't you like to know something about what's going to happen?"

"I do know a great deal about it."

"About what is going to happen?"

He smiled.

"Yes—a great deal, Ellic, enough to give me work for all the rest of my life."

"Oh, you mean from the Bible!—I was thinking of other things."

"It is best not to know the other things, Ellic; I am very glad to know those the Bible teaches us."

"But it doesn't tell us much, does it? What does it tell us?"

"Go to the window and tell me what you see."

"I don't see anything in particular," said Ellen, after taking a grave look out.

"Well, what in general?"

"Why, there is the lawn covered with snow, and the trees and bushes; and the sun is shining on everything just as it did the day we came; and there's the long shadow of that hemlock across the snow, and the blue sky."

"Now, look out again, Ellie, and listen. I know that a day is to come when those heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll—they shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; and it and all the works that are therein shall be burned up."

As he spoke Ellen's fancy tried to follow, to picture the ruin and desolation of all that stood so fair and seemed to stand so firm before her; but the sun shone on, the branches waved gently in the wind, the shadows lay still on the snow, and the blue heaven was fair and cloudless. Fancy was baffled. She turned from the window.

"Do you believe it?" said John.

"Yes," said Ellen, "I know it; but I think it is very disagreeable to think about it."

"It would be, Ellic," said he, bringing her again to his side, "very disagreeable—very miserable indeed, if we knew no more than that. But we know more—read here."

Ellen took his little Bible and read at the open place.

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, neither come into mind."

"Why won't they be remembered?" said Ellen; "shall we forget all about them?"

"No, I do not think that is meant. The new heavens and the new earth will be so much more lovely and pleasant that we shall not want to think of these."

Ellen's eyes sought the window again.

"You are thinking that it is hardly possible?" said John, with a smile.

"I suppose it is *possible*," said Ellen, "but—

"But lovely as this world is, Ellic, man has filled it with sin, and sin has everywhere brought its punishment, and under the weight of both the earth groans. There will be no sin *there*; sorrow and sighing shall flee away; love to each other and love to their blessed King will fill all hearts, and his presence will be with them. Don't you see that even if that world shall be in itself no better than this, it will yet be far, far more lovely than this can ever be with the shadows of sin upon it?"

"Oh, yes!" said Ellen. "I know whenever I feel wrong in any way nothing seems pretty or pleasant to me, or not half so much."

"Very well," said John, "I see you understand me. I like to think of that land, Ellen,—very much."

"Mr. John," said Ellen, "don't you think people will know each other again?"

"Those that love each other here? I have no doubt of it."

Before either John or Ellen had broken the long musing fit that followed these words, they were joined by Alice. Her head was better; and taking her place in the window-seat, the talk began again, between the brother and sister now, Ellen too happy to sit with them and listen. They talked of that land again, of the happy company preparing for it; of their dead mother, but not much of her; of the glory of their King, and the joy of His service, even here;—till thoughts grew too strong for words, and silence again stole upon the group. The short winter day came to an end; the sunlight faded away into moonlight. No shadows lay now on the lawn; and from where she sat, Ellen could see the great hemlock all silvered with the moonlight which began to steal in at the window. It was very, very beautiful; yet she could think now without sorrow that all this should come to an end; because of that new heaven and new earth wherein righteousness should dwell.

She had kneeled upon the window-seat and clasped Alice round the neck, just as they were called to tea. The conversation had banished every disagreeable feeling from Ellen's mind. She met her companions in the drawing-room, almost forgetting that she had any cause of complaint against them. And this appeared when in the course of the evening it came in her way to perform some little office of politeness for Marianne. It was done with the gracefulness that

could only come from a spirit entirely free from ungrateful feelings. The children felt it, and for the time were shamed into better behaviour. The evening passed pleasantly, and Ellen went to bed very happy.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FLOWERS AND THORNS.

THE next day it happened that the young people were amusing themselves with talking in a room where John Humphreys, walking up and down, was amusing *himself* with thinking. In the course of his walk, he began to find their amusement rather disturbing to his. The children were all grouped closely around Margaret Dunscombe, who was entertaining them with a long and very detailed account of a wedding and great party at Randolph which she had had the happiness of attending. Eagerly fighting her battles over again, and pleased with the rapt attention of her hearers, the speaker forgot herself and raised her voice much more than she meant to do. As every turn of his walk brought John near, there came to his ears sufficient bits and scraps of Margaret's story to give him a very fair sample of the whole; and he was sorry to see Ellen among the rest, and as the rest, hanging upon her lips and drinking in what seemed to him to be very poor nonsense. When he came near again she had got upon a different topic—"Miss Simmons," says I, "what did you do that for?" "Why," says she, "how could I help it? I saw Mr. Payne coming, and I thought I'd get behind you, and so——" The next time the speaker was saying with great animation, "And lo, and behold, when I was in the midst of all my pleasure, up comes a little gentleman of about his dimensions——" He had not taken many turns when he saw that Margaret's nonsense was branching out right and left into worse than nonsense.

"Ellen?" said he, suddenly, "I want you in the library."

"My conscience!" said Margaret as he left the room, "King John the Second, and no less."

"Don't go on till I come back," said Ellen; "I won't be three minutes; just wait for me."

She found John seated at one of the tables in the library, sharpening a pencil.

"Ellen," said he, in his usual manner, "I want you to do something for me."

She waited eagerly to hear what, but instead of telling her he took a piece of drawing-paper and began to sketch something. Ellen stood by, wondering and impatient to the last degree; not caring, however, to show her impatience, though her very feet were twitching to run back to her companions.

"Ellen," said John, as he finished the old stump of a tree with one branch left on it, and a little bit of ground at the bottom, "did you ever try your hand at drawing?"

"No," said Ellen.

"Then sit down here," said he, rising from his chair, "and let me see what you can make of that."

"But I don't know how," said Ellen.

"I will teach you. There is a piece of paper, and this pencil is sharp enough. Is that chair too low for you?"

He placed another, and with extreme unwillingness and some displeasure Ellen sat down. It was on her tongue to ask if another time would not do, but somehow she could not get the words out. John showed her how to hold her pencil, how to place her paper, where to begin, and how to go on; and then went to the other end of the room and took up his walk again. Ellen at first felt more inclined to drive her pencil *through* the paper than to make quiet marks upon it. However, necessity was upon her. She began her work; and once fairly begun it grew delightfully interesting. Her vexation went off entirely; she forgot Margaret and her story; the wrinkles on the old trunk smoothed those on her brow, and those troublesome leaves at the branch end brushed away all thoughts of everything else.

It was finished, and with head now on one side, now on the other, she was looking at her picture with very great satisfaction, when her eye caught the figure of John standing before her.

"Is it done?" said he.

"It is done," said Ellen, smiling, as she rose up to let him come. He sat down to look at it.

"It is very well," he said; "better than I expected; it is very well indeed. Is this your *first* trial, Ellen?"

"Yes, the first."

"You found it pleasant work?"

"Oh, very! very pleasant. I like it dearly."

"Then I will teach you. This shows you have a taste for it, and

that is precisely what I wanted to find out. I will give you an easier copy next time. • I rather expected when you sat down," said he, smiling a little, "that the old tree would grow a good deal more crooked under your hands than I meant it to be."

Ellen blushed exceedingly. "I do believe, Mr. John," she said, stammering, "that you know everything I am thinking about."

"I might do that, Ellen, without being as wise as an oracle. But I do not expect to make any very painful discoveries in that line," answered John Humphreys.

Ellen thought, if he did not, it would not be her fault.

Miss Sophia had quitted the tea-table, bidding William hand the doughnuts to those who could not reach them. Marianne took a great while to make her choice. Her brother grew impatient.

"Well, I hope you have suited yourself," said he. "Come, Miss Montgomery, don't you be as long; my arm is tired. Shut your eyes, and then you'll be sure to get the biggest one in the basket."

"No, Ellen," said John, who none of the children thought was near, "it would be ungenerous; I wouldn't deprive Master William of his best arguments."

"What do you mean by my arguments?" said William, sharply.

"Generally, those which are the most difficult to take in," answered his tormentor with perfect gravity.

Ellen tried to keep from smiling, but could not; and others of the party did not try. William and his sister were enraged, the more because John had said nothing they could take hold of, or even repeat. Gilbert made common cause with them.

"I wish I was grown up for once," said William.

"Will you fight *me*, sir?" asked Gilbert, who was a matter of three years older, and well grown enough.

His question received no answer, and was repeated.

"No, sir."

"Why not, sir?"

"I am afraid you'd lay me up with a sprained ankle," said John, "and I should not get back to Doncaster as quickly as I must."

"It is very mean of him," said Gilbert, as John walked away; "I could whip him, I know."

"Who's that?" said Mr. Howard Marshman.

"John Humphreys."

"John Humphreys! You had better not meddle with him, my dear fellow. It would be no particular proof of wisdom."

"Why, he's no such great affair," said Gilbert; "he is tall enough to be sure, but I don't believe he is heavier than I am."

"You don't know, in the first place, how to judge of the size of a perfectly well-made man; and in the second place, I was not a match for him a year ago; so you may judge. I do not know precisely," he went on to the lady he was walking with, "what it takes to rouse John Humphreys, but when he is roused, he seems to me to have strength enough for twice his bone and muscle. I have seen him do curious things once or twice!"

"That quiet Mr. Humphreys?"

"Humph!" said Mr. Howard; "gunpowder is pretty quiet stuff so long as it keeps cool."

The next day another matter happened to disturb Ellen. Margaret had received an elegant pair of ear-rings as a Christmas present, and was showing them for the admiration of her young friends. Ellen's did not satisfy her.

"Ain't they splendid?" said she. "Tell the truth now, Ellen Montgomery, wouldn't you give a great deal if somebody would send you such a pair?"

"They are very pretty," said Ellen, "but I don't think I care much for such things; I would rather have the money."

"Oh, you avaricious! Mr. Marshman!" cried Margaret, as the old gentleman was just then passing through the room, "here's Ellen Montgomery says she'd rather have money than anything else for her present."

He did not seem to hear her, and went out without making any reply.

"Oh, Margaret!" said Ellen, shocked and distressed, "how could you? how could you? What will Mr. Marshman think?"

Margaret answered that she didn't care what he thought. Ellen could only hope he had not heard.

But a day or two after, when neither Ellen nor her friends were present, Mr. Marshman asked who it was that had told him Ellen Montgomery would like money better than anything else for her New Year's present.

"It was I, sir," said Margaret.

"It sounds very unlike her to say so," remarked Mrs. Chauncey.

"Did she say so?" enquired Mr. Marshman.

"I understood her so," said Margaret; "I understood her to say she wouldn't care for anything else."

"I am disappointed in her," said the old gentleman; "I wouldn't have believed it."

"I do not believe it," said Mrs. Chauncey, quietly; "there has been some mistake."

It was hard for Ellen now to keep to what she thought right. Disagreeable feelings would rise when she remembered the impoliteness, the half sneer, the whole taunt, and the real unkindness of several of the young party. She found herself ready to be irritated, inclined to dislike the sight of those, even wishing to visit some sort of punishment upon them. But Christian principle had taken strong hold in little Ellen's heart; she fought her evil tempers manfully. It was not an easy battle to gain. Ellen found that resentment and pride had roots deep enough to keep her pulling up the shoots for a good while. She used to get alone when she could, to read a verse, if no more, of her Bible, and pray; she could forgive William and Margaret more easily then.

Meanwhile the famous needlebook was in a fair way to be finished. Great dismay had at first been excited in the breast of the intended giver by the discovery that Gilbert had consulted what seemed to be a very extraordinary fancy, in making the rose a yellow one. Ellen did her best to comfort her. She asked Alice, and found there were such things as yellow roses, and they were very beautiful too; and besides it would match so nicely the yellow butterfly on the other leaf.

"I had rather it wouldn't match!" said Ellen Chauncey, "and it don't match the rose-coloured silk besides. Are the yellow roses sweet?"

"No," said Ellen; "but *this* couldn't have been a sweet rose at any rate, you know."

"Oh, but," said the other, bursting out into a fresh passion of insoluble tears, "I wanted it should be the *picture* of a sweet rose! And I think he might have put a purple butterfly; yellow butterflies are so common. I had a great deal rather had a purple butterfly and a red rose!"

What cannot be cured, however, must be endured. The tears were dried in course of time, and the needlebook with its yellow pictures and pink edges was very neatly finished. Ellen had been busy too on her own account. Alice had got a piece of fine linen for her from Miss Sophia; the collar for Mr. Van Brunt had been cut out, and Ellen with great pleasure had made it. The stitching, the strings, and the very button-holes, after infinite pains, were all finished by Thurs-

day night. She had also made a needlecase for Alice, not of so much pretension as the other one: this was of green morocco lined with crimson satin; no leaves, but ribbon stitched in to hold papers of needles, and a place for a bodkin. Ellen worked very hard at this; it was made with the extremest care, and made beautifully. Besides the needlecase for Alice, she had snatched the time whenever she could get away from Ellen Chauncey to work at something for her. She had begged Alice's advice and help; and between them, out of Ellen's scraps of morocco and silk, they had manufactured a little bag of all the colours of the rainbow, and very pretty and tasteful withal. Ellen thought it a *chef-d'œuvre*, and was unbounded in her admiration. It lay, folded up in white paper in a locked drawer ready for New Year's day. In addition to all these pieces of business, John had begun to give her drawing lessons, according to his promise. These became Ellen's delight. She would willingly have spent much more time upon them than he would allow her. It was the most loved employment of the day. Her teacher's skill was not greater than the perfect gentleness and kindness with which he taught. Ellen thought of Mr. Howard's speech about gunpowder; she could not understand it.

"What is your conclusion on the whole?" asked John one day, as he stood beside her mending a pencil.

"Why," said Ellen, laughing and blushing, "how *could* you guess what I was thinking about, Mr. John?"

"Not very difficult when you are eyecing me so hard"

"I was thinking," said Ellen; "I don't know whether it is right in me to tell it, because somebody said you— --"

"Well?"

"Were like gunpowder."

"Very kind of somebody! And so you have been in doubt of an explosion?"

"No; I don't know; I wondered what he meant."

"Never believe what you hear said of people, Ellen; judge for yourself. Look here; that house has suffered from a severe gale of wind, I should think; all the uprights are slanting off to the right; can't you set it up straight?"

Ellen laughed at the tumble-down condition of the house as thus pointed out to her, and set about reforming it.

It was Thursday afternoon that Alice and Ellen were left alone in the library, several of the family having been called out to receive some visitors; Alice had excused herself, and Ellen, as soon as they were gone, nestled up to her side.

"How pleasant it is to be alone together, dear Alice ! I don't have you even at night now."

"It is very pleasant, dear Ellie ! Home will not look disagreeable again, will it ? even after all our gaiety here."

"No, indeed ! at least *your* home won't ; I don't know what mine will. Oh me ! I had almost forgotten Aunt Fortune !"

"Never mind, dear Ellie ! You and I have each something to bear ; we must be brave and bear it manfully. There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, you know. We shan't be unhappy if we do our duty and love Him."

"How soon is Mr. John going away ?"

"Not for all next week. And so long as he stays, I do not mean that you shall leave me."

Ellen cried for joy.

"I can manage it with Miss Fortune, I know," said Alice. "These fine drawing lessons must not be interrupted. John is very much pleased with your performances."

"Is he ?" said Ellen, delighted ; "I have taken all the pains I could."

"That is the sure way to success, Ellie. But, Ellie, I want to ask you about something. What was that you said to Margaret Dunscombe about wanting money for a New Year's present ?"

"You know it, then !" cried Ellen, starting up. "Oh, I am so glad ! I wanted to speak to you about it so, I didn't know what to do, and I thought I oughtn't to. What shall I do about it, dear Alice ? How did you know ? George said you were not there."

"Mrs. Chauncey told me ; she thought there had been some mistake, or something wrong ; how was it Ellen ?"

"Why," said Ellen, "she was showing us her ear-rings, and asking us what we thought of them, and she asked me if I wouldn't like to have such a pair ; and I thought I would a great deal rather have the money they cost, to buy other things with, you know, that I would like better ; and I said so ; and just then Mr. Marshman came in, and she called out to him, loud, that I wanted money for a present, or would like it better than anything else, or something like that. Oh, Alice, how I felt ! I was frightened ; but then I hoped Mr. Marshman did not hear her, for he did not say anything ; but the next day George told me all about what she had been saying in there, and oh, it made me so unhappy !" said poor Ellen, looking very dismal. "What will Mr. Marshman think of me ? He will think I expected a present, and I never dreamed of such a thing ! it makes me ashamed to

“speak of it even; and I *can't bear* he should think so; I can't bear it! What shall I do, dear Alice?”

• “I don't know what you can do, dear Ellie, but be patient. Mr. Marshman will not think anything very hard of you, I daresay.”

“But I think he *does* already; he hasn't kissed me since that as he did before; I know he *does*, and I don't know what to do. How could Margaret say that! oh how could she! it was very unkind. What can I do?” said Ellen, again, after a pause, and wiping away a few tears. “Couldn't Mrs. Chauncey tell Mr. Marshman not to give me anything, for that I never expected it, and would a great deal rather not?”

“Why, no, Ellie, I do not think that would be exactly the best or most dignified way.”

“What then, dear Alice? I'll do just as you say.”

“I would just remain quiet.”

• “But Ellen says the things are all put on the plates in the morning; and if there should be money on mine—I don't know what I should do, I should feel so badly. I couldn't keep it, Alice—I couldn't!”

“Very well—you need not—but remain quiet in the meanwhile; and if it should be so, then say what you please, only take care that you say it in a right spirit and in a right manner. Nobody can hurt you much, my child, while you keep the even path of duty; poor Margaret is her own worst enemy.”

“Then if there should be money in the morning, I may tell Mr. Marshman the truth about it?”

“Certainly—only do not be in haste; speak gently.”

“Oh, I wish everybody would be kind and pleasant always!” said poor Ellen, but half comforted.

“What a sigh was there!” said John, coming in. “What is the matter with my little sister?”

“Some of the minor trials of life, John,” said Alice, with a smile.

“What is the matter, Ellie?”

“Oh, something you can't help,” said Ellen.

• “And something I mustn't know. Well, to change the scene,—suppose you go with me to visit the greenhouse and hothouses. Have you seen them yet?”

“No,” said Ellen, as she eagerly sprang forward to take his hand.

“Ellen promised to go with me, but we have been so busy.”

“Will you come, Alice?”

"Not I," said Alice, "I wish I could, but I shall be wanted elsewhere."

"By whom, I wonder, so much as by me?" said her brother. "How-
ever, after to-morrow I will have you all to myself."

As he and Ellen were crossing the hall they met Mrs. Marshman.

"Where are you going, John?" said she.

"Where I ought to have been before, ma'am—to pay my respects to Mr. Hutchinson."

"You've not seen him yet! that is very ungrateful of you. Hutchinson is one of your warmest friends and admirers. There are few people he mentions with so much respect, or that he is so glad to see as Mr. John Humphreys."

"A distinction I owe, I fear, principally to my English blood," said John, shaking his head.

"It is not altogether that," said Mrs. Marshman, laughing; "though I do believe I am the only Yankee good Hutchinson has ever made up his mind entirely to like. But go and see him, do, he will be very much pleased."

"Who is Mr. Hutchinson?" said Ellen as they went on.

"He is the gardener, or rather the head gardener. He came out with his master some thirty or forty years ago, but his old English prejudice will go to the grave with him, I believe."

"But why don't he like the Americans?"

John laughed. "It would never do for me to attempt to answer that question, Ellic, fond of going to the bottom of things as you are. We should just get to hard fighting about tea-time, and should barely make peace by mid-day to-morrow at the most moderate calculation. You shall have an answer to your question, however."

Ellen could not conceive what he meant, but resolved to wait for his promised answer.

As they entered the large and beautifully kept greenhouse Hutchinson came from the farther end of it to meet them; an old man, of most respectable appearance. He bowed very civilly, and then slipped his pruning knife into his left hand to leave the right at liberty for John, who shook it cordially.

"And why 'aven't you been to see me before, Mr. John? I have thought it rather hard of you, Miss h'Alice has come several times."

"The ladies have more leisure, Mr. Hutchinson. You look flourishing here."

"Why, yes, sir, pretty middling within doors; but I don't like the

climate, Mr. John, I don't like the climate, sir. There's no country like h'England, I believe, for my business. 'Ere's a fine rose, sir,—if you'll step a bit this way—quite a new kind—I got it 'over last h'autumn—the Palmerston it is. Those are fine buds, sir."

"What does that flower make you think of, Ellen?" said John, stopping before a white camellia; his friend the gardener had left him to seek a newspaper in which he wished to show him a paragraph.

"I don't know," said Ellen,—“I couldn't think of anything but itself."

"It reminds me of what I ought to be—and of what I shall be if I ever see heaven; it seems to me the emblem of a sinless, pure spirit,—looking up in fearless spotlessness. Do you remember what was said to the old Church of Sardis,—‘Thou hast a few names that have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.’"

The tears rushed to Ellen's eyes, she felt she was so very unlike this; but Mr. Hutchinson coming back prevented anything more from being said.

"That's the paragraph, sir," said the old gardener, giving the paper to John. "'Ere's a little lady that is fond of flowers, if I don't make a mistake; this is somebody I've not seen before. Is this the little lady Miss h'Ellen was telling me about?"

"I presume so," said John; "she is Miss Ellen Montgomery, a sister of mine, Mr. Hutchinson, and Mr. Marshman's guest."

"By both names h'entitled to my greatest respect," said the old man, stepping back and making a very low bow to Ellen with his hand upon his heart, at which she could not help laughing. "I am very glad to see Miss h'Ellen; what can I do to make her remember old 'Utchinson?—would Miss h'Ellen like a bouquet?"

Ellen did not venture to say yes, but her blush and sparkling eyes answered him. The old gardener understood her, and was as good as his word. He began with cutting a beautiful sprig of a large purple geranium, then a slip of lemon myrtle. Ellen watched him as the bunch grew in his hand, and could hardly believe her eyes as one beauty after another was added to what became a most elegant bouquet. And most sweet too; to her joy the delicious daphne and fragrant lemon-blossom went to make part of it. Her thanks, when it was given her, were made with few words but with all her face; the old gardener smiled, and was quite satisfied that his gift was not

thrown away. He afterwards showed them his hothouses, where Ellen was astonished and very much interested to see ripe oranges and lemons in abundance, and pines, too, such as she had been eating since she came to Ventnor, thinking nothing less than that they grew so near home. The grapes had all been cut.

There was to be quite a party at Ventnor in the evening of New Year's day. Ellen knew this, and destined her precious flowers for Alice's adornment. How to keep them in the meanwhile? She consulted Mr. John, and according to his advice took them to Mrs. Bland, the housekeeper, to be put in water and kept in a safe place for her till the time. She knew Mrs. Bland, for Ellen Chauncey and she had often gone to her room to work where none of the children would find and trouble them. Mrs. Bland promised to take famous care of the flowers, and said she would do it with the greatest pleasure. "Mr. Marshman's guests," she added, smilingly, "must have everything they wanted."

"What does that mean, Mrs. Bland?" said Ellen.

"Why, you see, Miss Ellen, there's a deal of company always coming, and some is Mrs. Gillespie's friends, and some Mr. Howard's and some to see Miss Sophia more particularly, and some belong to Mrs. Marshman, or the whole family maybe; but now and then, Mr. Marshman has an old English friend or so, that he sets the greatest store by; and then he calls *his* guests; and the best in the house is hardly good enough for them, or the country either."

"And so I am one of Mr. Marshman's guests!" said Ellen, "I didn't know what it meant."

She saved out one little piece of rose-geranium from her flowers, for the gratification of her own nose; and skipped away through the hall to rejoin her companions, very light-hearted indeed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BANKNOTE AND GEORGE WASHINGTON.

NEW YEAR'S morning dawned.

"How I wish breakfast was over!" thought Ellen as she was dressing. However, there is no way of getting *over* this life but by going through it; so when the bell rang she went down as usual. Mr. Marshman had decreed that he would not have a confusion of gifts at

the breakfast-table; other people might make presents in their own way; they must not interfere with his. Needlecases, bags, and so forth, must therefore wait another opportunity; and Ellen Chaucey decided it would just make the pleasure so much longer, and was a great improvement on the old plan. "Happy New Years" and pleasant greetings were exchanged as the party gathered in the breakfast-room; pleasure sat on all faces except Ellen's, and many a one wore a broad smile as they sat down to table. For the napkins were in singular disarrangement this morning; instead of being neatly folded up on the plates, in their usual fashion, they were in all sorts of disorder, sticking up in curious angles, some high, some low, some half folded, some quite unfolded, according to the size and shape of that which they covered. It was worth while to see that long tableful, and the faces of the company, before yet a napkin was touched. An anxious glance at her own showed Ellen that it lay quite flat; Alice's, which was next, had an odd little rising in the middle, as if there were a small dumpling under it. Ellen was in an agony for this pause to come to an end. It was broken by some of the older persons, and then in a trice every plate was uncovered. And then what a buzz! pleasure, and thanks, and admiration, and even laughter. Ellen dreaded at first to look at her plate; she bethought her, however, that if she waited long she would have to do it with all eyes upon her. She lifted the napkin slowly—yes—just as she feared!—a clean banknote—of what value she could not tell. Confusion covered her; the blood rushed to her cheeks, and tears to her eyes. She could not have spoken. It was no time then; everybody else was speaking. She could not have been heard. She had time to cool and recollect herself; but she sat with her eyes cast down, fastened upon her plate and the unfortunate bankbill, which she detested with all her heart. She did not know what Alice had received; she understood nothing that was going on, till Alice touched her, and said gently, "Mr. Marshman is speaking to you, Ellen."

"Sir!" said Ellen, starting.

"You need not look so terrified," said Mr. Marshman, smiling; "I only asked you if your bill was a counterfeit—something seems to be wrong about it."

Ellen looked at her plate and hesitated. Her lip trembled.

"What is it?" continued the old gentleman, "Is anything the matter?"

Ellen desperately took up the bill, and with burning cheeks marched to his end of the table.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, but I had a great deal rather not; if you please—if you will please to be so good as to let me give it back to you—I should be very glad."

"Why, hoity toity!" said the old gentleman, "what's all this? what's the matter? don't you like it? I thought I was doing the very thing that would please you best of all."

"I am very sorry you should think so, sir," said Ellen, who had recovered a little breath, but had the greatest difficulty to keep back her tears; "I never thought of such a thing as your giving me anything, sir, till somebody spoke of it, and I had rather never have anything in the world than that you should think what you thought about me."

"What did I think about you?"

"George told me that somebody told you, sir, I wanted money for my present."

"And didn't you say so?"

"Indeed I didn't, sir!" said Ellen with sudden fire. "I never thought of such a thing!"

"What *did* you say, then?"

"Margaret was showing us her ear-rings, and she asked me if I wouldn't like to have some like them; and I couldn't help thinking I would a great deal rather have the money they would cost to buy something for Alice; and just when I said so you came in, sir, and she said what she did. I was very much ashamed. I wasn't thinking of you, sir, at all, nor of New Year."

"Then you would like something else better than money?"

"No, sir, nothing at all, if you please. If you'll only be so good as not to give me this I will be very much obliged to you indeed; and please not to think I could be so shameful as you thought I was."

Ellen's face was not to be withstood. The old gentleman took the bill from her hand.

"I will never think anything of you," said he, "but what is the very tip-top of honourable propriety. But you make *me* ashamed now—what am I going to do with this?—here have you come and made me a present, and I feel very awkward indeed."

"I don't care what you do with it, sir," said Ellen, laughing, though in imminent danger of bursting into tears—"I am very glad it is out of *my* hands."

"But you needn't think I am going to let you off so," said he; "you must give me half a dozen kisses at least, to prove that you have forgiven me for making so great a blunder."

"Half a dozen is too many at once," said Ellen, gaily, "three now and three to night."

So she gave the old gentleman three kisses, but he caught her in his arms and gave her a dozen at least, after which he found out that the waiter was holding a cup of coffee at his elbow, and Ellen went back to her place with a very good appetite for her breakfast.

After breakfast the needlecases were delivered. Both gave the most entire satisfaction. Mrs. Chauncey assured her daughter that she would quite as lief have a yellow as a red rose on the cover, and that she liked the inscription extremely, which the little girl acknowledged to have been a joint device of her own and Ellen's. Ellen's bag gave great delight, and was paraded all over the house.

After the bustle of thanks and rejoicing was at last over, and when she had a minute to herself, which Ellen Chauncey did not give her for a good while, Ellen bethought her of her flowers—a sweet gift still to be made. Why not make it now? Why should not Alice have the pleasure of them all day? A bright thought! Ellen ran forthwith to the housekeeper's room, and after a long admiring look at her treasures, carried them, glass and all, to the library, where Alice and John often were in the morning alone. Alice thanked her in the way she liked best, and then the flowers were smelled and admired afresh.

"Nothing could have been pleasanter to me, Ellie, except Mr. Marshman's gift."

"And what was that, Alice? I haven't seen it yet."

Alice pulled out of her pocket a small round morocco case, the very thing that Ellen had thought looked like a dumpling under the napkin, and opened it.

"It's Mr. John!" exclaimed Ellen. "Oh, how beautiful!"

Neither of her hearers could help laughing.

"It is very fine, Ellie," said Alice, "you are quite right. Now I know what was the business that took John to Randolph every day, and kept him there so long, while I was wondering at him unspeakably. Kind, kind Mr. Marshman."

"Did Mr. John get anything?"

"Ask him, Ellie."

"Did you get anything, Mr. John?" said Ellen, going up to him where he was reading on the sofa.

"I got this," said John, handing her a little book which lay beside him.

"What is this? Wime's--Wiem's--Life of Washington--Washington? he was--may I look at it?"

"Certainly!"

She opened the book, and presently sat down on the floor where she was by the side of the sofa. Whatever she had found within the leaves of the book, she had certainly lost herself. An hour passed. She had not spoken or moved except to turn over leaves.

"Ellen?" said John.

She looked up, her cheeks coloured high.

"What have you found there?" said he, smiling.

"Oh, a great deal! But--did Mr. Marshman give you this?"

"No."

"Oh!" said Ellen, looking puzzled, "I thought you said you got this this morning."

"No, I got it last night. I got it for you, Ellie."

"For me!" said Ellen, her colour deepening very much--"for me! did you? Oh, thank you!--oh, I'm so very much obliged to you, Mr. John."

"It is only an answer to one of your questions."

"This! is it?--I don't know what, I am sure. Oh, I wish I could do something to please you, Mr. John!"

"You shall, Ellie; you shall give me a brother's right again."

Blushingly Ellen approached her lips to receive one of his grave kisses; and then, not at all displeased, went down on the floor and was lost in her book.

Oh, the long joy of that New Year's day! how shall it be told?

The pleasure of that delightful book, in which she was wrapped the whole day; even when called off, as she often was, by Ellen Chauncey, to help her in fifty little matters of business or pleasure. These were attended to, faithfully and cheerfully, but the book was in her head all the while. And this pleasure was mixed with Alice's pleasure, the flowers and the miniature, and Mr. Marshman's restored kindness. She never met John's or Alice's eye that day without a smile. Even when she went to be dressed her book went with her, and was laid on the bed within sight, ready to be taken up the moment she was at liberty. Ellen Chauncey lent her a white frock which was found to answer very well with a tuck let out; and Alice herself dressed her. While this was doing, Margaret Dunscombe put her head in at the

door to ask Anne, Miss Sophia's maid, if she was almost ready to come and curl her hair.

"Indeed, I can't say that I am, Miss Margaret," said Anne. "I've something to do for Miss Humphreys, and Miss Sophia hasn't so much as done the first thing towards beginning to get ready yet. It'll be a good hour and more."

Margaret went away exclaiming impatiently that she could get nobody to help her, and would have to wait till everybody was downstairs.

A few minutes after she heard Ellen's voice at the door of her room asking if she might come in.

"Yes—what's that? what do you want?"

"I'll fix your hair if you'll let me," said Ellen.

"You? I don't believe you can."

"Oh, yes, I can; I used to do mamma's very often; I am not afraid if you'll trust me."

"Well, thank you, I don't care if you try, then," said Margaret, seating herself, "it won't do any harm at any rate; and I want to be downstairs before anybody gets here; I think it's half the fun to see them come in. Bless me! you're dressed and all ready."

Margaret's hair was in long thick curls; it was not a trifling matter to dress them. Ellen plodded through it patiently and faithfully, taking great pains, and doing the work well; and then went back to Alice. Margaret's thanks, not very gracefully given, would have been a poor reward for the loss of three-quarters of an hour of pleasure. But Ellen was very happy in having done right. It was no longer time to read; they must go downstairs.

The New Year's party was a nondescript, young and old together; a goodly number of both were gathered from Randolph and the neighbouring country. In the course of the evening, Mrs. Chauncey found occasion to ask Ellen about her journey up the river, without at all mentioning Margaret or what she had said.

Ellen answered that she had come with Mrs. Dunscombe and her daughter.

"Did you have a pleasant time?" asked Mrs. Chauncey.

"Why, no, ma'am," said Ellen, "I don't know—it was partly pleasant and partly unpleasant."

"What made it so, love?"

"I had left mamma that morning, and that made me unhappy."

"But you said it was partly pleasant?"

"Oh, that was because I had such a good friend on board," said Ellen, her face lighting up as his image came before her.

"Who was that?"

"I don't know, ma'am, who he was."

"A stranger to you?"

"Yes, ma'am—I never saw him before—I wish I could see him again."

"Where did you find him?"

"I didn't find him—he found me, when I was sitting up on the highest part of the boat."

"And your friends with you?"

"What friends?"

"Mrs. Dunscombe and her daughter."

"No, ma'am, they were down in the cabin."

"And what business had you to be walking about the boat alone?" said Mr. Marshman, good-humouredly.

"They were strangers, sir," said Ellen, colouring a little.

"Well, so was this man—your friend—a stranger too, wasn't he?"

"Oh, he was a very different stranger," said Ellen, smiling, "and he wasn't a stranger long, besides."

"Well, you must tell me more about him, come, I'm curious; what sort of a strange friend was this?"

"He wasn't a *strange* friend," said Ellen, laughing; "he was a very, very good friend; he took care of me the whole day; he was very good and very kind."

"What kind of a man?" said Mrs. Chauncey; "a gentleman?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am!" said Ellen, looking surprised at the question "I am sure he was."

"What did he look like?"

Ellen tried to tell, but the portrait was not very distinct.

"What did he wear? Coat or cloak?"

"Coat—dark brown, I think."

"This was in the end of October, wasn't it?"

Ellen thought a moment and answered, "Yes."

"And you don't know his name?"

"No, ma'am; I wish I did."

"I can tell you," said Mrs. Chauncey, smiling; "he is one of my best friends too, Ellen; it is my brother, Mr. George Marshman."

How Ellen's face crimsoned! Mr. Marshman asked how she knew.

"It was then he came up the river, you know, sir; and don't you

remember his speaking of a little girl on board the boat who was travelling with strangers, and whom he endeavoured to befriended? "I had forgotten it entirely till a minute or two ago."

"Miss Margaret Dunscombe!" cried George Walsh, "what kind of a person was that you said Ellen was so fond of when you came up the river?"

"I don't know, nor care," said Margaret. "Somebody she picked up somewhere."

"It was Mr. George Marshman!"

"It wasn't."

"Uncle George!" exclaimed Ellen Chauncey, running up to the group her cousin had quitted; "My Uncle George? Do you know Uncle George, Ellen?"

"Very much—I mean—yes," said Ellen.

Ellen Chauncey was delighted. So was Ellen Montgomery. It seemed to bring the whole family nearer to her, and they felt it too. Mrs. Marshman kissed her when she heard it, and said she remembered very well her son's speaking of her, and was very glad to find who it was. And now, Ellen thought, she would surely see him again some time.

The next day they left Ventnor. Ellen Chauncey was very sorry to lose her new friend, and begged she would come again "as soon as she could." All the family said the same. Mr. Marshman told her she must give him a large place in her heart, or he should be jealous of her "strange friend"; and Alice was charged to bring her whenever she came to see them.

The drive back to Carra-carra was scarcely less pleasant than the drive out had been; and home, Ellen said, looked lovely. That is, Alice's home, which she began to think more her own than any other. The pleasure of the past ten days, though great, had not been unmixed; the week that followed was one of perfect enjoyment. In Mr. Humphreys' household there was an atmosphere of peace and purity that even a child could feel, and in which such a child as Ellen thrived exceedingly. The drawing lessons went on with great success; other lessons were begun; there were fine long walks, and charming sleigh-drives, and more than one visit to Mrs. Vawse; and what Ellen perhaps liked best of all, the long evenings of conversation and reading aloud, and bright firelights, and brighter sympathy, and intelligence, and affection. That week did them all good, and no one more than Ellen.

It was a little hard to go back to Miss Fortune's and begin her old life there. She went on the evening of the day John had departed. They were at supper.

"Well!" said Miss Fortune, as Ellen entered, "have you got enough of visiting? I should be ashamed to go where I wasn't wanted, for my part."

"I haven't, Aunt Fortune," said Ellen.

"She's been nowhere but what's done her good," said Mr. Van Brunt; "she's reely growed handsome since she's been away."

"Grown a fiddlestick!" said Miss Fortune.

"She couldn't grow handsomer than she was before," said the old grandmother, hugging and kissing her little granddaughter with great delight; "the sweetest-positic in the garden she always was!"

Mr. Van Brunt looked as if he entirely agreed with the old lady. That, while it made some amends for Miss Fortune's dryness, perhaps increased it. She remarked that "she thanked Heaven she could always make herself contented at home"; which Ellen could not help thinking was a happiness for the rest of the world.

In the matter of the collar, it was hard to say whether the giver or receiver had the most satisfaction. Ellen had begged him not to speak of it to her aunt; and accordingly one Sunday when he came there with it on, both he and she were in a state of exquisite delight. Miss Fortune's attention was at last aroused; she made a particular review of him, and ended it by declaring that "he looked uncommonly dandified, but she could not make out what he had done to himself"; a remark which transported Mr. Van Brunt and Ellen beyond all bounds of prudence.

Nancy's Bible, which had been purchased for her at Randolph, was given to her the first opportunity. Ellen anxiously watched her as she slowly turned it over, her face showing, however, very decided approbation of the style of the gift. She shook her head once or twice, and then said—

"What did you give this to me for, Ellen?"

"Because I wanted to give you something for New Year," said Ellen, "and I thought that would be the best thing,—if you would only read it it would make you so happy and good."

"You are good, I believe," said Nancy, "but I don't expect ever to be myself—I don't think I *could* be. You might as well teach a snake not to wriggle."

"I am not good at all," said Ellen, "we're none of us good,"—and

the tears rose to her eyes,—“but the Bible will teach us how to be. If you'll only read it ! please, Nancy, do ! say you, will read a little every day.”

“You don't want me to make a promise I shouldn't keep, I guess, do you?”

“No,” said Ellen.

“Well, I shouldn't keep that, so I won't promise it ; but I tell you what I *will* do, I'll take precious fine care of it, and keep it, always for your sake.”

“Well,” said Ellen, sighing, “I am, glad you will even do so much as that. But, Nancy—before you begin to read the Bible you may have to go where you never can read it, nor be happy nor good neither.”

Nancy made no answer, but walked away, Ellen thought, rather more soberly than usual.

“This conversation had cost Ellen some effort. It had not been made without a good deal of thought and some prayer. She could not hope she had done much good, but she had done her duty. And it happened that Mr. Van Brunt, standing behind the angle of the wall, had heard every word.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A GATHERING CLOUD IN THE SPRING WEATHER.

ELLEN's life had nothing to mark it for many months. The rest of the winter passed quietly away, every day being full of employment. At home the state of matters was rather bettered. Either Miss Fortune was softened by Ellen's gentle inoffensive ways and obedient usefulness, or she had resolved to bear what could not be helped, and make the best of the little inmate she could not get rid of. She was certainly resolved to make the *most* of her. Ellen was kept on the jump a great deal of the time ; she was runner of errands and maid of all work ; to set the table and clear it was only a trifle in the list of her every-day duties ; and they were not ended till the last supper dish was put away and the hearth swept up. Miss Fortune never spared herself and never spared Ellen, so long as she had any occasion for her.

As the days grew long and the weather warm, Alice and Ellen began to make frequent trips to the Cat's Back, and French came

very much into fashion. They generally took Sharp to ease the long way, and rested themselves with a good stay on the mountain. Their coming was always a joy to Mrs. Vawse. She was dearly fond of them both, and delighted to hear from their lips the language she loved best. After a time they spoke nothing else when with her. She was well qualified to teach them; and, indeed, her general education had been far from contemptible, though nature had done more for her. As the language grew familiar to them, she loved to tell and they to hear long stories of her youth and native country, scenes and people so very different from all Ellen had ever seen or heard of; and told in a lively simple style which she could not have given in English, and with a sweet colouring of Christian thought and feeling. Many things made these visits good and pleasant. It was not the least of Alice's and Ellen's joy to carry their old friend something that might be for her comfort in her lonely way of life. For even Miss Fortune now and then told Ellen "she might take a piece of that cheese along with her;" or "she wondered if the old lady would like a little fresh meat? she guessed she'd cut her a bit of that nice lamb; she wouldn't want but a little piece." A singular testimony this was to the respect and esteem Mrs. Vawse had from everybody. Miss Fortune very, very seldom was known to take a bit from her own comforts to add to those of another. The ruling passion of this lady was thrift; her next, good housewifery. First, to gather to herself and heap up of what the world most esteems; after that, to be known as the most thorough housekeeper and the smartest woman in Thirlwall.

Ellen made other visits she did not like so well. In the course of the winter and summer she became acquainted with most of the neighbourhood. She sometimes went with her aunt to a formal tea-drinking, one, two, three, or four miles off, as the case might be. They were not very pleasant. To some places she was asked by herself; and though the people invariably showed themselves very kind, and did their best to please her, Ellen seldom cared to go a second time; liking even home and Miss Fortune better. There were a few exceptions, Jenny Hitchcock was one of her favourites, and Jane Huff was another; and all of their respective families came in, with good reason, for a share of her regard, Mr. Juniper indeed excepted. Once they went to a quilting at Squire Dennison's; the house was spotlessly neat and well ordered; the people all kind: but Ellen thought they did not seem to know how to be pleasant. Dan Dennison alone

had no stiffness about him. Miss Fortune remarked with pride that even in this family of pretension, as she thought it, the refreshments could bear no comparison with hers. Once they were invited to tea at the Lawsons'; but Ellen told Alice, with much apparent disgust, that she never wanted to go again. Mrs. Van Brunt she saw often. To Thirlwall Miss Fortune never went.

Twice in the course of the summer Ellen had a very great pleasure in the company of little Ellen Chauncey. Once Miss Sophia brought her, and once her mother; and the last time they made a visit of two weeks. On both occasions Ellen was sent for to the parsonage and kept while they stayed; and the pleasure that she and her little friend had together cannot be told. It was unmixed now. Rambling about through the woods and over the fields, no matter where, it was all enchanting; helping Alice garden; helping Thomas make hay, and the mischief they did his haycocks by tumbling upon them, and the patience with which he bore it; the looking for eggs; the helping Margery churn, and the helping each other set tables; the pleasant mornings and pleasant evenings and pleasant mid-days, it cannot be told. Long to be remembered, sweet and pure, was the pleasure of those summer days, unclouded by a shade of discontent or disagreement on either brow. Ellen loved the old Marshman family now for the sake of one, the one she had first known; and little Ellen Chauncey repeatedly told her mother in private that Ellen Montgomery was the very nicest girl she had ever seen. They met with joy and parted with sorrow, entreating and promising, if possible, a speedy meeting again.

Amidst all the improvements and enjoyments of these summer months, and they had a great deal of both, for Ellen there was one cause of sorrow she could not help feeling, and it began to press more and more. Letters—they came slowly, and when they came they were not at all satisfactory. Those in her mother's hand dwindled and dwindled, till at last there came only mere scraps of letters from her; and sometimes after a long interval one from Captain Montgomery would come alone. Ellen's heart sickened with long-deferred hope. She wondered what could make her mother neglect a matter so necessary for her happiness; sometimes she fancied they were traveling about, and it might be inconvenient to write; sometimes she thought perhaps they were coming home without letting her know, and would suddenly surprise her some day and make her half lose her wits with joy. But they did not come, nor write; and whatever was

the reason, Ellen felt very sad, and sadder and sadder as the summer went on. Her own letters became pitiful in their supplications for letters; they had been very cheerful and filled with encouraging matter, and in part they were still.

For a while her mind was diverted from this sad subject, and her brow cleared up, when John came home in August. As before, Alice gained Miss Fortune's leave to keep her at the parsonage the whole time of his stay, which was several weeks. Ellen wondered that it was so easily granted, but she was much too happy to spend time in thinking about it. Miss Fortune had several reasons. She was unwilling to displease Miss Humphreys, and conscious that it would be a shame to her to stand openly in the way of Ellen's good. Besides, though Ellen's services were lost for a time, yet she said she got tired of setting her to work; she liked to dash round the house alone, without thinking what somebody else was doing or ought to be doing. In short, she liked to have her out of the way for a while. Furthermore, it did not please her that Mr. Van Brunt and her little handmaid were, as she expressed it, "so thick." His first thought and his last thought, she said, she believed were for Ellen, whether she came in or went out; and Miss Fortune was accustomed to be chief, not only in her own house, but in the regards of all who came to it. At any rate, the leave was granted and Ellen went.

Now drawing went on with new vigour under the eye of her master. And many things beside. John took a great deal of pains with her in various ways. He made her read to him; he helped her and Alice with their French; he went with them to Mrs. Vawse's; and even Mr. Humphreys went there too one afternoon to tea. How much Ellen enjoyed that afternoon! They took with them a great basket of provisions, for Mrs. Vawse could not be expected to entertain so large a party; and borrowed Jenny Hitchcock's pony, which with old John and Sharp mounted three of the company; they took turns in walking. Nobody minded that. The fine weather, the beautiful mountain-top, the general pleasure, Mr. Humphreys' uncommon spirits and talkableness, the oddity of their way of travelling, and of a tea-party up on the "Cat's Back," and furthermore, the fact that Nancy stayed at home and behaved very well the whole time, all together filled Ellen's cup of happiness, for the time, as full as it could hold. She never forgot that afternoon. And the ride home was the best of all. The sun was low by the time they reached the plain; long shadows lay across their road; the soft air just stirred

the leaves on the branches; stillness and loveliness were over all things; and down the mountain and along the roads through the open country, the whole way, John walked at her bridle; so kind in his care of her, so pleasant in his talk to her, teaching her how to sit in the saddle and hold the reins and whip, and much more important things too, that Ellen thought a pleasanter thing could not be than to ride so. After that they took a great many rides, borrowing Jenny's pony or some other, and explored the beautiful country far and near. And almost daily John had up Sharp and gave Ellen a regular lesson. She often thought, and sometimes looked, what she had once said to him, "I wish I could do something for you, Mr. John;" but he smiled and said nothing.

At last he was gone. And in all the weeks he had been at home, and in many weeks before, no letter had come for Ellen. The thought had been kept from weighing upon her by the thousand pleasures that filled up every moment of his stay; she could not be sad then, or only for a minute; hope threw off the sorrow as soon as it was felt; and she forgot how time flew. But when his visit was over, and she went back to her old place and her old life at her aunt's, the old feeling came back in greater strength. She began again to count the days and the weeks; to feel the bitter unsatisfied longing. Tears would drop down upon her Bible; tears streamed from her eyes when she prayed that God would make her mother well and bring her home to her quickly, oh, quickly!—and little Ellen's face began to wear once more something of its old look.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CLOUD OVERHEAD.

ONE day in the early part of September, she was standing in front of the house at the little wicket that opened on the road. With her back against the open gate, she was gently moving it to and fro, half enjoying the weather and the scene, half indulging the melancholy mood which drove her from the presence of her bustling aunt. The gurgling sound of the brook a few steps off was a great deal more soothing to her ear than Miss Fortune's sharp tones. By-and-by a horseman came in sight at the far end of the road, and the brook was forgotten. What made Ellen look at him so sharply? Poor child,

she was always expecting news. At first she could only see that the man rode a white horse; then, as he came nearer, an odd looped-up hat showed itself, and something queer in his hand, what was it? who is it? The old newsman? Ellen was sure. Yes—she could now see his saddle-bags, and the white horse-tail set in a handle with which he was brushing away the flies from his horse; the tin trumpet was in his other hand, to blow withal. He was a venerable old figure with all his oddities; clad in a suit of snuff-brown, with a neat quiet look about him, he and the saddle-bags and the white horse jogged on together as if they belonged to nothing else in the world but each other. In an ecstasy of fear and hope Ellen watched the pace of the old horse to see if it gave any sign of slackening near the gate. Her breath came short, she hardly breathed at all, she was trembling from head to foot. *Would he stop, or was he going on!* Oh, the long agony of two minutes! He stopped. Ellen went towards him.

"What little gal is this?" said he.

"I am Ellen Montgomery, sir," said Ellen, eagerly; "Miss Fortune's niece—I live here."

"Stop a bit," said the old man, taking up his saddle-bags, "Miss Fortune's niece, eh? Well—I believe—as I've got somethin' for her—somethin' here—*aunt well, eh?*"

"Yes, sir."

"That's more than you be, ain't it?" said he, glancing sideways at Ellen's face. "How do you know but I've got a letter for you here, eh?"

The colour rushed to that face, and she clasped her hands.

"No, dear, no," said he, "I ha'n't got any for you—it's for the old lady—there, run in with it, dear."

But Ellen knew before she touched it that it was a foreign letter, and dashed into the house with it. Miss Fortune coolly sent her back to pay the postage.

When she came in again her aunt was still reading the letter. But her look, Ellen felt, was unpromising. She did not venture to speak; expectation was chilled. She stood till Miss Fortune began to fold up the paper.

"Is there nothing for me?" she said then, timidly.

"No."

"Oh, why don't she write to me!" cried Ellen, bursting into tears.

Miss Fortune stalked about the room without any particular purpose, as far as could be seen.

"It is very strange!" said Ellen, sorrowfully, "I am afraid she is worse—does papa say she is worse?"

"No."

"Oh, if she had only sent me a message! I should think she might. Oh, I wish she had!—three words!—does papa say why she don't write?"

"No."

"It is very strange!" repeated poor Ellen.

"Your father talks of coming home," said Miss Fortune, after a few minutes, during which Ellen had been silently weeping.

"Home!—then she must be better!" said Ellen, with new life; "does papa say she is better?"

"No."

"But what does he mean?" said Ellen, uneasily; "I don't see what he means; he doesn't say she is worse, and he doesn't say she is better, what *does* he say?"

"He don't say much about anything."

"Does he say when they are coming home?"

Miss Fortune mumbled something about "Spring," and whisked off to the buttery; Ellen thought no more was to be got out of her. She felt miserable. Her father and aunt both seemed to act strangely; and where to find comfort she scarcely knew. She had been one day telling her doubts and sorrows to John. He did not try to raise her hopes, but said "Troubles will come in this world, Ellie; the best is to trust them and ourselves to our dear Saviour, and let trials drive us to Him. Seek to love Him more and to be patient under His will; the good Shepherd means nothing but kindness to any lamb in His flock, you may be sure of that, Ellie."

Ellen remembered his words and tried to follow them now, but she could not be "patient under His will" yet, not quite. It was very hard to be patient in such uncertainty. With swimming eyes she turned over her Bible in search of comfort, and found it. Her eye lit upon words she knew very well, but that were like the fresh sight of a friend's face for all that. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions." There is no parting there, thought little Ellen. She cried a long time; but she was comforted nevertheless. The heart that rests on the blessed One who said those words can never be quite desolate.

One afternoon she was giving her best attention to a French lesson

when she heard herself called. Miss Fortune was in the lower kitchen dipping candles. Ellen ran down.

"I don't know what's got into these candles," said Miss Fortune. "I can't make 'em hang together; the tallow ain't good, I guess. Where's the nearest place they keep bees?"

"They have got bees at Mrs. Hitchcock's," said Ellen.

"So they have in Egypt, for anything I know," said her aunt; "one would be about as much good now as t'other. Mrs. Lowndes'; that ain't far off. Put on your bonnet, Ellen, and run over there, and ask her to let me have a little beeswax. I'll pay her in something she likes best."

"Does Mrs. Lowndes keep bee-hives?" said Ellen, doubtfully.

"No—she makes the beeswax herself," said Miss Fortune, in the tone she always took when anybody presumed to suppose she might be mistaken in anything.

"How much shall I ask for?" said Ellen.

"Oh, I don't know—a pretty good piece."

Ellen was not very clear what quantity this might mean. However, she wisely asked no more questions, and set out upon her walk. It was hot and disagreeable; just the time of day when the sun had most power, and Mrs. Lowndes' house was about half way on the road to Alice's. It was not a place where Ellen liked to go, though the people always made much of her; she did not fancy them, and regularly kept out of their way when she could. Miss Mary Lawson was sitting with Mrs. Lowndes and her daughter when Ellen came in and briefly gave her aunt's message.

"Beeswax," said Mrs. Lowndes, "well, I don't know. How much does she want?"

"I don't know, ma'am, exactly; she said a pretty good piece."

"What's it for? do you know, honey?"

"I believe it's to put in some tallow for candles," said Ellen; "the tallow was too soft, she said."

"I didn't know Miss Fortune's tallow was ever anything but the hardest," said Sarah Lowndes.

"You had better not let your aunt know you've told on her, Ellen," remarked Mary Lawson; "she won't thank you."

"Had she a good lot of tallow to make up?" enquired the mother, preparing to cut her beeswax.

"I don't know, ma'am; she had a big kettle, but I don't know how full it was."

"You may as well cut a good piece, ma, while you are about it," said the daughter; "and ask her to let us have a piece of her sage cheese, will you?"

"Is it worth while to weigh it?" whispered Mrs. Lowndes.

Her daughter answered in the same tone, and Miss Mary joining them, a conversation of some length went on over the beeswax which Ellen could not hear. The tones of the speakers became lower and lower; till at length her own name and an incautious sentence were spoken more distinctly and reached her.

"Shouldn't you think Miss Fortune might put a black ribbon at least on her bonnet?"

"Anybody but her would."

"Hush!—" They whispered again under breath.

The words entered Ellen's heart like cold iron. She did not move hand or foot; she sat motionless with pain and fear, yet what she feared she dared not think. When the beeswax was given her she rose up from her chair and stood gazing into Mrs. Lowndes' face as if she had lost her senses.

"My goodness, child, how you look!" said that lady. "What ails you, honey?"

"Ma'am," said Ellen, "what was that you said, about ——"

"About what, dear?" said Mrs. Lowndes, with a startled look at the others.

"About—a ribbon," said Ellen, struggling to get the words out of white lips.

"My goodness!" said the other; "did you ever hear anything like that? I didn't say nothing about a ribbon, dear."

"Do you suppose her aunt ha'n't told her?" said Miss Mary, in an undertone.

"Told me what?" cried Ellen. "Oh what? what?"

"I wish I was a thousand miles off!" said Mrs. Lowndes; "I don't know, dear—I don't know what it is—Miss Alice knows."

"Yes, ask Miss Alice," said Mary Lawson; "she knows better than we do."

Ellen looked doubtfully from one to the other; then as "Go, ask Miss Alice," was repeated on all sides, she caught up her bonnet and, flinging the beeswax from her hand, darted out of the house. Those who had left looked at each other a minute in silence.

"Ain't that too bad now!" exclaimed Mrs. Lowndes, crossing the room to shut the door. "But what could I say?"

"Which way did she go?"

"I don't know, I am sure—I had no head to look, or anything else. I wonder if I had ought to ha' told her? But I couldn't ha' done it."

They all made a rush to the door to look after her.

"She ain't in sight," said Mrs. Lowndes; "if she's gone the way to the Nose she's got as far as them big poplars already, or she'd be somewhere this side of 'em where we could see her."

"You hadn't ought to ha' let her go, ma, in all this sun," said Miss Lowndes.

"I declare," said Mrs. Lowndes, "she scared me so I hadn't three deas left in my head. I wish I knew where she was, though, poor little soul!"

Ellen was far on her way to the mountain, pressed forward by a fear that knew no stay or fatigue; they were little to her that day. She saw nothing on her way; all within and without was swallowed up in that one feeling; yet she dared not think what it was she feared. She put that by. Alice knew, Alice would tell her! on that goal her heart fixed, to that she pressed on; but oh, the while, what a cloud was gathering over her spirit, and growing darker and darker. Her hurry of mind and hurry of body made each other worse; it must be so; and when she at last ran round the corner of the house and burst in at the glass door she was in a frightful state.

Alice started up and faced her as she came in, but with a look that stopped Ellen short. She stood still; the colour in her cheeks, as her eyes read Alice's, faded quite away; words and the power to speak them were gone together. Alas! the need to utter them was gone too. Alice burst into tears, and held out her arms, saying only, "My poor child!" Ellen reached her arms, and strength and spirit seemed to fail there. Alice thought she had fainted; she laid her on the sofa, called Margery, and tried the usual things, weeping bitterly herself as she did so. It was not fainting however; Ellen's senses soon came back; but she seemed like a person stunned with a great blow, and Alice wished grief had had any other effect upon her. It lasted for days. A kind of stupor hung over her; tears did not come; the violent strain of every nerve and feeling seemed to have left her benumbed. She would sleep long heavy sleeps the greater part of the time, and seemed to have no power to do anything else.

Her adopted sister watched her constantly, and for those days lived but to watch her. She had heard all Ellen's story from Mary Lawson

and Mr. Van Brunt ; who had both been to the parsonage, one on Mrs. Lowndes' part, the other on his own, to ask about her ; and she dreaded that a violent fit of illness might be brought on by all Ellen had undergone. She was mistaken, however. Ellen was not ill ; but her whole mind and body bowed under the weight of the blow that had come upon her. As the first stupor wore off there were indeed more lively signs of grief ; she would weep till she wept her eyes out, and that often, but it was very quietly ; no passionate sobbing, no noisy crying ; sorrow had taken too strong a hold to be struggled with, and Ellen meekly bowed her head to it. Alice saw this with the greatest alarm. She had refused to let her go back to her aunt's ; it was impossible to do otherwise ; yet it may be that Ellen would have been better there. The busy industry to which she would have been forced at home might have roused her ; as it was, nothing drew her, and nothing could be found to draw her, from her own thoughts. Her interest in everything seemed to be gone. Books had lost their charm. Walks and drives and staying at home were all one, except indeed that she rather liked best the latter. Appetite failed ; her cheeks grew colourless ; and Alice began to fear that if a stop were not soon put to this gradual sinking, it would at last end with her life. But all her efforts were without fruit ; and the winter was a sorrowful one not to Ellen alone.

As it wore on, there came to be one thing in which Ellen again took pleasure, and that was her Bible. She used to get alone or into a corner with it, and turn the leaves over and over again ; looking out its gentle promises and sweet comforting words to the weak and the sorrowing. She loved to read about Christ, all He said and did ; all His kindness to His people and tender care of them ; the love shown them here, and the joys prepared for them hereafter. She began to cling more to that one unchangeable Friend from whose love neither life nor death can sever those that believe in Him ; and her heart, tossed and shaken as it had been, began to take rest again in that happy resting-place with stronger affection and even with greater joy than ever before. Yet for all that, this joy often kept company with bitter weeping ; the stirring of anything like pleasure roused sorrow up afresh ; and though Ellen's look of sadness grew less dark, Alice could not see that her face was at all less white and thin. She never spoke of her mother after once hearing when and where she had died ; she never hinted at her loss, except exclaiming in an agony, " I shall get no more letters ! " and Alice dared not touch upon what the

child seemed to avoid so carefully ; though Ellen sometimes wept on her bosom, and often sat for hours still and silent with her head in her lap.

The time drew nigh when John was expected home for the holidays. In the meanwhile they had had many visits from other friends. Mr. Van Brunt had come several times, enough to set the whole neighbourhood wondering if they had only known it ; his good old mother oftener still, Mrs. Vawse as often as possible. Miss Fortune once ; and that because, as she said to herself, "everybody would be talking about what was none of their business if she didn't." As neither she nor Ellen knew in the least what to say to each other, the visit was rather a dull one, spite of all Alice could do. Jenny Hitchcock, and the Huffs, and the Dennisons, and others, came now and then ; but Ellen did not like to see any of them all but Mrs. Vawse. Alice longed for her brother.

He came at last, just before New Year's day. It was the middle of a fine afternoon, and Alice and her father had gone in the sleigh to Carra-carra. Ellen had chosen to stay behind, but Margery did not know this, and of course did not tell John. After paying a visit to her in the kitchen, he had come back to the empty sitting-room, and was thoughtfully walking up and down the floor, when the door of Alice's room slowly opened, and Ellen appeared. It was never her way, when she could help it, to show violent feeling before other people ; so she had been trying to steel herself to meet John without crying, and now came in with her little grave face prepared not to give way. His first look had like to overset it all.

"Ellie !" said he ; "I thought everybody was gone. My dear Ellie !—"

Ellen could hardly stand the tone of these three words, and she bore with the greatest difficulty the kiss that followed them ; it took but a word or two more, and a glance at the old look and smile, to break down entirely all her guard. According to her usual fashion, she was rushing away ; but John held her fast, and though gently, drew her close to him.

"I will not let you forget that I am your brother, Ellie," said he.

Ellen hid her face on his shoulder, and cried as if she had never cried before.

"Ellie," said he, after awhile, speaking low and tenderly, "the Bible says, 'We have known and believed the love that God hath towards us' ; have you remembered and believed this ately?"

Ellen did not answer.

"Have you remembered that God loves every sinner that has believed in His dear Son? and loves them so well that He will let nothing come near them to harm them? and loves them never better than when He sends bitter trouble on them? It is wonderful! but it is true. Have you thought of this, Ellie?"

She shook her head.

"It is not in anger He does it; it is not that He has forgotten you; it is not that He is careless of your trembling little heart, never, never! If you are His child, all is done in love and shall work good for you and if we often cannot see how, it is because we are weak and foolish, and can see but a very little way."

Ellen listened, with her face hid on his shoulder.

"Do you love Christ, Ellen?"

She nodded, weeping afresh.

"Do you love Him less since He has brought you into this great sorrow?"

"No," sobbed Ellen; "*more*."

He drew her closer to his breast, and was silent a little while.

"I am very glad to hear you say that! then all will be well. And haven't you the best reason to think that all is well with your dear mother?"

Ellen almost shrieked. Her mother's name had not been spoken before her in a great while, and she could hardly bear to hear it now. Her whole frame quivered with hysterical sobs.

"Hush, Ellie!" said John, in a tone that, low as it was, somehow found its way through all her agitation, and calmed her like a spell; "have you not good reason to believe that all is well with her?"

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes!"

"She loved and trusted Him too; and now she is with Him; she has reached that bright home where there is no sin, nor sorrow, nor death."

"Nor parting either," sobbed Ellen, whose agitation was excessive.

"Nor parting! and though we are parted from them, it is but for a little; let us watch and keep our garments clean, and soon we shall be all together, and have done with tears for ever. *She* has done with them now. Did you hear from her again?"

"Oh, no; not a word!"

"That is a hard trial. But in it all, believe, dear Ellie, the love that God hath towards us; remember that our dear Saviour is near us

and feels for us, and is the same at all times. And don't cry so Ellie."

He kissed her once or twice, and begged her to calm herself. For it seemed as if Ellen's very heart was flowing away in her tears; yet they were gentler and softer far than at the beginning. The conversation had been a great relief. The silence between her and Alice on the thing always in her mind, a silence neither of them dared to break, had grown painful. The spell was taken off; and though at first Ellen's tears knew no measure, she was easier even then; as John soothed her and went on with his kind talk, gradually leading her away from their first subject to other things, she grew not only calm, but more peaceful at heart than months had seen her. She was quite herself again before Alice came home.

"You have done her good already," exclaimed Alice, as soon as Ellen was out of the room; "I knew you would; I saw it in her face as soon as I came in."

"It is time," said her brother. "She is a dear little thing!"

The next day, in the middle of the morning, Ellen, to her great surprise, saw Sharp brought before the door with the side-saddle on and Mr. John carefully looking to the girth, and shortening the stirrup.

"Why, Alice," she exclaimed, "what is Mr. John going to do?"

"I don't know, Ellie, I am sure; he does queer things sometimes. What makes you ask?"

Before she could answer, he opened the door.

"Come, Ellen, go and get ready. Bundle up well, for it is rather frosty. Alice, has she a pair of gloves that are warm enough? Lend her yours, and I'll see if I can find some at Thirlwall."

Ellen thought she would rather not go; to anybody else she would have said so. Half a minute she stood still, then went to put on her things.

"Alice, you will be ready by the time we get back? in half an hour."

Ellen had an excellent lesson, and her master took care it should not be an easy one. She came back looking as she had not done all the winter. Alice was not quite ready; while waiting for her, John went to the bookcase and took down the first volume of "Rollin's Ancient History"; and giving it to Ellen, said he would talk to her to-morrow about the first twenty pages. The consequence was, the hour and a half of their absence instead of being moped away was spent in hard study. A pair of gloves was bought at Thirlwall; Jenny Hitchcock's pony was sent for; and, after that, every day when the

weather would at all do, they took a long drive. By degrees, reading and drawing, and all her studies were added to the history, till Ellen's time was well filled with business again. Alice had endeavoured to bring this about before, but fruitlessly. What she asked of her, Ellen indeed *tried* to do; what John told her *was done*. She grew a different creature. Appetite came back; the colour sprang again to her cheek; hope, meek and sober as it was, relighted her eye. In her eagerness to please and satisfy her teacher, her whole soul was given to the performance of whatever he wished her to do. The effect was all that he looked for.

The second evening after he came, John called Ellen to his side, saying he had something he wanted to read to her. It was before candles were brought, but the room was full of light from the blazing wood fire. Ellen glanced at his book as she came to the sofa; it was a largish volume in a black leather cover a good deal worn; it did not look at all interesting.

"What is it?"

"It is called," said John, "'The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to a better.'"

Ellen thought it did not *sound* at all interesting. She had never been more mistaken in her life, and that she found almost as soon as he began. Her attention was failed; the listless, careless mood in which she started it was changed for one of rapt delight; she devoured every word that fell from the reader's lips; indeed, they were given their fullest effect by a very fine voice and singularly fine reading. Whenever anything might not be quite clear to Ellen, John stopped to make it so; and with his help, and without it, many a lesson went home. Next day she looked a long time for the book; it could not be found; she was forced to wait until evening. Then, to her great joy, it was brought out again, and John asked her if she wished to hear some more of it. After that, every evening while he was at home they spent an hour with the "Pilgrim." Alice would leave her work and come to the sofa too; and with her head on her brother's shoulder, her hand in his, and Ellen's face leaning against his other arm, that was the common way they placed themselves to see and hear. No words can tell Ellen's enjoyment of those readings. They made her sometimes laugh and sometimes cry; they had much to do in carrying on the cure which John's wisdom and kindness had begun.

They came to the place where Christian loses his burden at the

cross ; and as he stood, looking and weeping, three shining ones came to him. The first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee ; the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with a change of raiment ; the third also set a mark on his forehead."

John explained what was meant by the rags and the change of raiment.

"And the mark on his forehead ?" said Ellen.

"That is the mark of God's children - the change wrought in them by the Holy Spirit - the change that makes them different from others, and different from their old selves."

"Do all Christians have it ?"

"Certainly. None can be a Christian without it."

"But how can anyone tell whether one has it or no ?" said Ellen, very gravely.

"Carry your heart and life to the Bible and see how they agree. The Bible gives a great many signs and descriptions by which Christians may know themselves - know both what they are and what they ought to be. If you find your own feelings and manner of life at one with these Bible words, you may hope that the Holy Spirit has changed you and set His mark upon you."

Another time, when they came to the last scene of Christian's journey, Ellen's tears ran very fast. John asked if he should pass it over ? if it distressed her ? She said, Oh, no, it did not distress her ; she wanted him to go on ; and he went on, though himself much distressed and Alice was near as bad as Ellen. But the next evening, to his surprise, Ellen begged that before he went on to the second part he would read that piece over again. And when he lent her the book, with only the charge that she should not go farther than he had been, she pored over that scene with untiring pleasure till she almost had it by heart. In short, never was a child more comforted and contented with a book than Ellen was with the "Pilgrim's Progress." That was a blessed visit of John's. Alice said he had come like a sun-beam into the house ; she dreaded to think what would be when he went away.

She wrote him, however, when he had been gone a few weeks, that his will seemed to carry all before it, present or absent. Ellen went on steadily mending ; at least she did not go back. They were keeping up their rides, also their studies, most diligently ; Ellen was untiring in her efforts to do whatever he had wished her, and was springing forward, Alice said, in her improvement.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THIS "WORKING-DAY WORLD."

THE spring had come, and Alice and Ellen were looking forward to pleasanter rides and walks after the sun should have got a little warmth and the snow should be gone, when one morning in the early part of March Mr. Van Brunt made his appearance. Miss Fortune was not well, and had sent him to beg that Ellen would come back to her. He was sorry, he said; he knew Ellen was in the best place; but her aunt wanted her, and "he s'posed she'd have to go." He did not know what was the matter with Miss Fortune; it was a little of one thing and a little of another; "he s'posed she'd overdid, and it was a wonder, for he didn't know she *could* do it. *She* thought she was as tough as a piece of shoe-leather, but even that could be wore out."

Ellen looked blank. However, she hurriedly set herself to get her things together, and with Alice's help in half an hour she was ready to go. The parting was hard. They held each fast a good while, and kissed each other many times without speaking.

"Good-bye, dear Ellie," whispered Alice at last; "I'll come and see you soon. Remember what John said when he went away."

Ellen did not trust herself to speak. She pulled herself away from Alice, and turned to Mr. Van Brunt, saying by her manner that she was ready; he took her bundle and they went out of the house together.

When they reached the door he told her she would find her aunt upstairs, and himself turned off to the barn. Ellen stopped a minute upon the threshold to remember the last time she had crossed it, and the *first* time; how changed everything now? and the thought came, was *this* now to be her home for ever? She had need again to remember John's words. When bidding her good-bye he had said, "My little pilgrim, I hope you will keep the straight road, and win the praise of the servant who was faithful over a few things." "I will try!" thought poor Ellen; and then she passed through the kitchen and went up to her own room. Here, without stopping to think, she took off her things, gave one strange look at the old familiar place and her trunk in the corner, fell on her knees for one minute, and then went to her aunt's room.

"Come in!" cried Miss Fortune, when Ellen had knocked. "Well, Ellen, there you are. I am thankful it is you; I was afraid it might be Mimy Lawson or Sarah Lowndes, or some of the rest of the set; I know they'll all come scampering here as soon as they hear I'm laid up."

"Are you very sick, Aunt Fortune?" said Ellen.

"La! no, child; I shall be up again to-morrow; but I feel queer this morning somehow, and I thought I'd try lying down. I expect I've caught some cold."

There was no doubt of this, but this was not all. Besides catching cold, and doing her best to bring it about, Miss Fortune had overtasked her strength; and by dint of economy, housewifery, and *smartness*, had brought on herself the severe punishment of lying idle and helpless for a much longer time than she at first reckoned on.

"What can I do for you, Aunt Fortune?" said Ellen.

"Oh, nothing, as I know," said Miss Fortune, "only let me alone and don't ask me anything, and keep people out of the house. Mercy! my head feels as if it would go crazy! Ellen, look here," said she, raising herself on her elbow, "I won't have anybody come into this house, if I lie here till doomsday, I won't! Now, you mind me. I ain't going to have Mimy Lawson, nor nobody else, poking all round into every hole and corner, and turning every cheese upside down to see what's under it. There ain't one of 'em too good for it, and they shan't have a chance. They'll be streaking here, a dozen of 'em, to help take care of the house; but I don't care what becomes of the house—I won't have anybody in it. Promise me you won't let Mr. Van Brunt bring anyone here to help; I know I can trust to you to do what I tell you; promise me!"

Ellen promised, a good deal gratified at her aunt's last words; and once more asked if she could do anything for her.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Miss Fortune, flinging herself back on her pillow; "I don't care what you do if you only keep the house clear. There's the clothes in the basket under the table downstairs—you might begin to iron 'em; they're only rough dry. But don't come asking me about anything; I can't bear it. Ellen, don't let a soul go into the buttery except yourself. And, Ellen! I don't care if you make me a little catnip tea; the catnip's up in the store-room, the farthest door in the back attic—here's the keys. Don't go fussing with anything else there."

Ellen thought the prospects before her rather doleful when she

reached the kitchen. It was in order, to be sure, and clean; but it looked as if the mistress was away. The fire had gone out, the room was cold; even so little a matter as catnip tea seemed a thing far off and hard to come by. While she stood looking at the great logs in the fireplace, which she could hardly move, and thinking it was rather a dismal state of things, in came Mr. Van Brunt with his good-natured face, and wanted to know if he could do anything for her. The very room seemed more comfortable as soon as his big figure was in it. He set about kindling the fire forthwith, while Ellen went up to the store-room. How to make catnip tea Ellen did not exactly know, but supposed it must follow the same rules as black tea, in the making of which she felt herself very much at home. So she put a pinch or two of catnip leaves into the pot, poured a little water on them, and left it to draw. Meanwhile came in kind Mr. Van Brunt with an armful or two of small short sticks for the fire, which Ellen could manage.

"I wish I could stay here and take care of you all the while," said he; "but I'll be round. If you want anything you must come to the door and holler."

Ellen began to thank him.

"Just don't say anything about that," said he, moving his hands as if he were shaking her thanks out of them; "I'd back all the wood you could burn every day for the pleasure of having you hum again, if I didn't know you was better where you was; but I can't help that. Now, who am I going to get to stay with you? Who would you like to have?"

"Nobody, if you please, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen; "Aunt Fortune don't wish it, and I had rather not, indeed."

He stood up, and looked at her in amazement.

"Why, you don't mean to say," said he, "that you are thinking, or she is thinking, you can get along here alone without help?"

"I'll get along somehow," said Ellen. "Never mind, please let me, Mr. Van Brunt; it would worry Aunt Fortune very much to have anybody; don't say anything about it."

"Worry her!" said he; and he muttered something Ellen did not quite understand, about "bringing the old woman to reason."

However, he went off for the present; and Ellen filled her teapot and carried it upstairs. Her old grandmother was awake; before, when Ellen was in the room, she had been napping; now she showed the greatest delight at seeing her; fondled her, kissed her, cried over

her, and finally insisted on getting up directly and going downstairs. Ellen received and returned her caresses with great tenderness, and then began to help her to rise and dress.

"Yes, do," said Miss Fortune; "I shall have a little better chance of sleeping. My stars! Ellen, what do you call this?"

"Isn't it catnip?" said Ellen, alarmed.

"Catnip! it tastes of nothing but the tea-kettle. It's as weak as dish-water. Take it down and make some more. How much did you put in? you want a good double handful, stalks and all; make it strong. I can't drink such stuff at that. I think if I could get into a sweat I should be better."

Ellen went down, established her grandmother in her old corner, and made some more tea. Then, her irons being hot, she began to iron; doing double duty at the same time, for Mrs. Montgomery had one of her talking fits on, and it was necessary to hear and answer a great many things. Presently the first visitor appeared in the shape of Nancy.

"Well, Ellen," said she; "so Miss Fortune is really sick for once, and you are keeping house. Ain't you grand?"

"I don't feel very grand," said Ellen. "I don't know what is the matter with these clothes; I *cannot* make 'em look smooth."

"Irons ain't hot," said Nancy.

"Yes they are, too hot. I've scorched a towel already."

"My goodness, Ellen! I guess you have. If Miss Fortune was down you'd get it. Why, they're bone dry!" said Nancy, plunging her hand into the basket: you haven't sprinkled 'em, have you?"

"To be sure," said Ellen, with an awakened face, "I forgot it!"

"Here, get out of the way, I'll do it for you," said Nancy, rolling up her sleeves and pushing Ellen from the table; "you just get me a bowl of water, will you? and we'll have 'em done in no time. Who's a coming to help you?"

"Nobody."

"Nobody! you poor chicken; do you think you're going to do all the work of the house yourself?"

"No," said Ellen, "but I can do a good deal, and the rest will have to go."

"You ain't going to do no such thing; I'll stay myself."

"No, you can't, Nancy," said Ellen, quietly.

"I guess I will if I've a mind to. I should like to know how you'd help it; Miss Fortune's abed."

"I could help it though," said Ellen; "but I'm sure you won't when I ask you not."

"I'll do anything you please," said Nancy, "if you'll get Miss Fortune to let me stay. Come do, Ellen! It will be splendid, and I'll help you finely, and I won't bother you neither. Come, go ask her; if you don't I will."

"I can't, Nancy; she don't want anybody; and it worries her to talk to her. I can't go and ask her."

Nancy impatiently flung down the cloth she was sprinkling and ran upstairs. In a few minutes she came down with a triumphant face and bade Ellen go up to her aunt.

"Ellen," said Miss Fortune, "if I let Nancy stay will you take care of the keys and keep her out of the buttery?"

"I'll try to, ma'am, as well as I can."

"I'd as lief have her as anybody," said Miss Fortune, "if she'd behave; she was with me a little in the winter; she is smart and knows the ways; if I was sure she'd behave herself, but I'm afraid she will go rampaging about the house like a wild cat."

"I think I could prevent that," said Ellen, who, to say truth, was willing to have anybody come to share what she felt would be a very great burden. "She knows I could tell Mr. Van Brunt if she didn't do right, and she would be afraid of that."

"Well," said Miss Fortune, disconsolately, "let her stay then. Oh dear, to lie here! but tell her if she don't do just what you tell her, I'll have Mr. Van Brunt turn her out by the ears. And don't let her come near me, for she drives me mad. And, Ellen, put the keys in your pocket. Have you got a pocket in that dress?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Put 'em in there and don't take 'em out! Now go."

Nancy agreed to the conditions with great glee; and the little housekeeper felt her mind a good deal easier; for though Nancy herself was somewhat of a charge, she was strong, and willing, and ready, and if she liked anybody, liked Ellen. Mr. Van Brunt privately asked Ellen if she chose to have Nancy stay; and told her, if she gave her any trouble to let him know, and he would make short work with her. The young lady herself also had a hint on the subject.

"I'll tell you what," said Nancy, when this business was settled, "we'll let the men go off to Mrs. Van Brunt's to meals; we'll have enough to do without 'em. That's how Miss Fortune has fixed her-

self, she would have Sam and Johnny in to board; they never used to, you know, afore this winter."

"The men may go," said Ellen, "but I had a great deal rather Mr. Van Brunt would stay than not, if we can only manage to cook things for him; we should have to do it at any rate for ourselves, and for grandina."

"Well, I ain't as fond of him as all that," said Nancy, "but it'll have to be as you like, I suppose. We'll feed him somehow."

Mr. Van Brunt came in to ask if they had anything in the house for supper. Ellen told him "plenty," and would have him come in just as usual. There was nothing to do but to make tea; cold meat, and bread and butter, and cheese were all in the buttery; so that evening went off very quietly.

When she came down the next morning the fire was burning nicely, and the kettle on and singing. Not Nancy's work. Mr. Van Brunt had slept in the kitchen, whether on the table, the floor, or the chairs, was best known to himself; and before going to his work had left everything he could think of ready done to her hand. Ellen stood warming herself at the blaze, when it suddenly darted into her head that it was milking time. In another minute she had thrown open the door and was running across the chip-yard to the barn. There, in the old place, were all her old friends, both four-legged and two-legged; and with great delight she found Dolly had a fine calf, and Streaky another superb one, brindled just like herself. Ellen longed to get near enough to touch their little innocent heads, but it was impossible; and recollecting the business on her hands she too danced away.

Miss Fortune was not dangerously ill; but one part of the time in a low, nervous fever, part of the time encumbered with other ailments, she lay from week to week; bearing her confinement as ill as possible and making it as disagreeable and burdensome as possible for Ellen to attend upon her. Those were weeks of trial. Ellen's patience, and principle, and temper were all put to the proof. She had no love, in the first place, for household work, and now her whole time was filled up with it. Studies could not be thought of. Reading was only to be had by mere snatches. Walks and rides were at an end. Often when already very tired she had to run up and down stairs for her aunt, or stand and bathe her face and hands with vinegar, or read the paper to her when Miss Fortune declared she was so nervous she should fly out of her skin if she didn't hear something besides the

wind. And very often when she was not wanted upstairs, her old grandmother would beg her to come and read to *her*—perhaps at the very moment when Ellen was busiest. Ellen did her best. Miss Fortune never could be put off; her old mother sometimes could, with a kiss and a promise; but not always; and then, rather than she should fret, Ellen would leave everything and give half an hour to soothing and satisfying her. She loved to do this at other times; now it was sometimes burdensome. Nancy could not help her at all in these matters, for neither Miss Fortune nor the old lady would let her come near them. Besides all this, there was a measure of care constantly upon Ellen's mind; she felt charged with the welfare of all about the house; and under the effort to meet the charge, joined to the unceasing bodily exertion, she grew thin and pale. She was tired with Nancy's talk; she longed to be reading and studying again; she longed, oh, how she longed! for Alice's and John's company again; and it was no wonder if she sometimes cast very sad longing looks further back still. Her morning hour of prayer was very precious now; and her Bible grew more and more dear. Little Ellen found its words a mighty refreshment; and often when reading it she loved to recall what Alice had said at this and the other place, and John, and Mr. Marshman, and before them her mother. The passages about heaven, which she well remembered reading to her one particular morning, became great favourites; they were joined with her mother in Ellen's thoughts; and she used to go over and over them till she nearly knew them by heart.

"What *do* you keep reading that for, the whole time?" said Nancy one day.

"Because I like to," said Ellen.

"Well, if you do, you're the first one that ever I saw that did."

"Oh, Nancy," said Ellen; "your grandma!"

"Well, she does, I believe," said Nancy, "for she's always at it; but all the rest of the folks that ever I saw are happy to get it out of their hands, I know. They think they must read a little, and so they do, and they are too glad if something happens to break 'em off. You needn't tell *me*; I've seen 'em."

"I wish *you* loved it, Nancy," said Ellen.

"Well, what do you love it for, come? let's hear; maybe you'll convert me."

"I love it for a great many reasons," said Ellen, who had some difficulty in speaking of what she felt Nancy could not understand.

"Well, I ain't any wiser yet."

"I like to read it, because I want to go to heaven, and it tells me how."

"But what's the use?" said Nancy; "you ain't going to die yet; you are too young; you've time enough."

"Oh, Nancy! little John Dulan, and Eleanor Parsons, and Mary Huff, all younger than you and I; how can you say so?"

"Well," said Nancy, "at any rate, that ain't reading it because you love it; it's because you must, like other folks."

"That's only one of my reasons," said Ellen, hesitating and speaking gravely; "I like to read about the Saviour, and what He has done for me, and what a friend He will be to me, and how He forgives me. I had rather have the Bible, Nancy, than all the other books in the world."

"That ain't saying much," said Nancy; "but how come you to be so sure you are forgiven?"

"Because the Bible says, 'He that believeth on Him shall not be ashamed,' and I believe in Him; and that He will not cast out anyone that comes to Him, and I have come to Him; and that He loves those that love Him, and I love Him. If it did not speak so very plainly I should be afraid, but it makes me happy to read such verses as these. I wish you knew, Nancy, how happy it makes me." This profession of faith was not spoken without starting tears. Nancy made no reply.

As Miss Fortune had foretold, plenty of people came to the house with proffers of service. Nancy's being there made it easy for Ellen to get rid of them all. Many were the marvels that Miss Fortune should trust her house "to two girls like that," and many the guesses that she would rue it when she got up again. People were wrong. Things went on very steadily and in an orderly manner; and Nancy kept the peace as she would have done in few houses. Bold and insolent as she sometimes was to others, she regarded Ellen with a mixed notion of respect and protection, which led her at once to shun doing anything that would grieve her, and to thrust her aside from every heavy or difficult job, taking the brunt herself. Nancy might well do this, for she was at least twice as strong as Ellen; but she would not have done it for everybody.

It was in the beginning of April. Ellen came downstairs early, but come when she would she found the fire made and the kettle on. Ellen felt a little as if she had not quite slept off the remembrance of yester-

day's fatigue; however, that was no matter; she set to work. She swept up the kitchen, got her milk-strainer and pans ready upon the buttery shelf, and began to set the table. By the time this was all done, in came Sam Larkens with two great pails of milk, and Johnny Low followed with another. They were much too heavy for Ellen to lift, but true to her charge she let no one come into the buttery but herself; she brought the pans to the door, where Sam filled them for her, and as each was done she set it in its place on the shelf. This took some time, for there were eight of them. She had scarce wiped up the spilt milk and finished setting the table when Mr. Van Brunt came in.

"Good-morning!" said he. "How d'ye do to-day?"

"Very well, Mr. Van Brunt."

"I wish you'd look a little redder in the face. Don't you be too busy. Where's Nancy?"

"Oh, she's busy out with the clothes."

"Same as ever upstairs? What are you going to do for breakfast Ellen?"

"I don't know, Mr. Van Brunt; there isn't anything cooked in the house; we've eaten everything up."

"Cleaned out, eh? Bread and all?"

"Oh, no, not bread; there's plenty of that, but there's nothing else."

"Well, never mind; you bring me a ham and a dozen of eggs, and I'll make you a first-rate breakfast."

Ellen laughed, for this was not the first time Mr. Van Brunt had acted as cook for the family. While she got what he had asked for and bare a place on the table for his operations, he went to the spout and washed his hands.

"Now a sharp knife, Ellen, and the frying-pan, and a dish, and that's all I want of you."

"Who's frying ham and eggs downstairs?" enquired Miss Fortune

"Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen.

This answer was unexpected. Miss Fortune tossed her head over in a dissatisfied kind of way, and told Ellen to "tell him to be careful."

Breakfast was ready but no one there when she got downstairs. She placed her grandmother at table, and called Nancy, who all this time had been getting the clothes out of the rinsing water and hanging them out on the line to dry. Ellen poured out the coffee, and then in came Mr. Van Brunt with a head of early lettuce which he had

pulled in the garden and washed at the spout. Mr. Van Brunt praised Ellen's coffee (he had taught her how to make it), and she praised his ham and eggs. Old Mrs. Montgomery praised everything, and seemed to be in particular comfort; talking as much as she had a mind, and was respectfully attended to. Nancy was in high feather; and the clatter of knives and forks and tea-cups went on very pleasantly. But at last chairs were pushed from the table, and work began again.

When she got down next morning she found the kitchen in nice order, and Nancy standing by the fire in a little sort of pause, having just done her breakfast dishes.

"Well!" said Nancy, "what are you going to do now?"

"Put away these dishes, and then churn," said Ellen.

"My goodness! so you are. What's going to be for dinner, Ellen?"

"That's more than I know," said Ellen, laughing. "We have eaten up Mrs. Van Brunt's pie and washed the dish; there's nothing but some cold potatoes."

"That won't do," said Nancy. "I'll tell you what, Ellen, we'll just boil pot for to-day; somebody else will send us something by to-morrow most likely."

"I don't know what you mean by 'boil pot,'" said Ellen.

"Oh, you don't know everything yet, by half. I know - I'll fix it. You just give me the things, Miss Housekeeper, that's all you've got to do; I want a piece of pork and a piece of beef, and all the vegetables you've got."

"All?" said Ellen.

"Every soul on 'em. Don't be scared, Ellen; you shall see what I can do in the way of cookery; if you don't like it you needn't eat it. What have you got in the cellar?"

"Come and see, and take what you want, Nancy; there is plenty of potatoes and carrots and onions, and beets, I believe; the turnips are all gone."

"Parsnips out in the yard, ain't there?"

"Yes, but you'll have to do with a piece of pork, Nancy, I don't know anything about beef."

While Nancy went round the cellar gathering in her apron the various roots she wanted, Ellen uncovered the pork barrel, and after looking a minute at the dark pickle she never loved to plunge into, bravely bared her arm and fished up a piece of pork.

"Now, Nancy, just help me with this churn out of the cellar, will you, and then you may go."

"My goodness, it is heavy," said Nancy. "You'll have a time of it, Ellen; but I can't help you."

She went off to the garden for parsnips, and Ellen quietly put in the dasher and cover, and began to churn. It was tiresome work. The churn was pretty full, as Nancy had said; the cream was rich and cold, and at the end of half an hour grew very stiff. It splattered and sputtered up on Ellen's face and hands and apron, and over the floor; legs and arms were both weary; but still that pitiless dasher must go up and down, hard as it might be to force it either way; she must not stop. In this state of matters she heard a pair of thick shoes come clumping down the stairs, and beheld Mr. Van Brunt.

"Here you are!" said he. "Churning!—been long at it?"

"A good while," said Ellen, with a sigh.

"Coming?"

"I don't know when."

Mr. Van Brunt stepped to the door and shouted for Sam Larkens. He was ordered to take the churn and bring the butter; and Ellen, very glad of rest, went out to amuse herself with feeding the chickens, and then upstairs to see what Nancy was doing.

"Butter come?" said Nancy.

"No, Sam has taken it. How are you getting on? Oh, I am tired!"

"I'm getting on first-rate; I've got all the things in."

"In what?"

"Why, in the pot!—in a pot of water, boiling away as fast as they can; we'll have dinner directly. Hurra! who comes there?"

She jumped to the door. It was Thomas, bringing Margery's respects, and a custard-pie for Ellen.

"I declare," said Nancy, "it's a good thing to have friends, ain't it? I'll try and get some. Hollo, what's wanting? Mr. Van Brunt's calling you, Ellen."

Ellen ran down.

"The butter's come," said he. "Now, do you know what to do with it?"

"Oh, yes," said Ellen, smiling; "Margery showed me nicely."

He brought her a pail of water from the spout, and stood by with a pleased kind of look, while she carefully lifted the cover and rinsed down the little bits of butter which stuck to it and the dasher; took

out the butter with her ladle into a large wooden bowl, washed it, and finally salted it.

"Don't take too much pains," said he; "the less of the hand it gets the better. That will do very well."

"Now, are you ready?" said Nancy, coming downstairs, "'cause dinner is. My goodness! ain't that a fine lot of butter? there's four pounds, ain't there?"

"Fige," said Mr. Van Brunt.

"And as sweet as it can be," said Ellen. "Beautiful, isn't it? Yes, I'm ready, as soon as I set this in the cellar and cover it up."

Nancy's dish, the pork, potatoes, carrots, beets, and cabbage, all boiled in the same pot together, was found very much to everybody's taste except Ellen's. She made her dinner off potatoes and bread, the former of which she declared, laughing, were very porky and cabbagey; her meal would have been an extremely light one had it not been for the custard-pie.

After dinner new labours began. Nancy had forgotten to hang on a pot of water for the dishes; so, after putting away the eatables in the buttery, while the water was heating, Ellen warmed some gruel and carried it with a plate of biscuit upstairs to her aunt. But Miss Fortune said she was tired of gruel, and couldn't eat it; she must have some milk porridge; and she gave Ellen very particular directions how to make it. Ellen sighed only once as she went down with her despised dish of gruel, and set about doing her best to fulfil her aunt's wishes. The first dish of milk she burnt; another sigh and another trial; better care this time had better success, and Ellen had the satisfaction to see her aunt perfectly suited with her dinner.

When she came down with the empty bowl, Nancy had a pile of dishes ready washed, and Ellen took the towel to dry them. Mrs. Montgomery, who had been in an uncommonly quiet fit all day, now laid down her knitting and asked if Ellen would not come and read to her.

"Presently, grandma, as soon as I have done here."

"I know somebody that's tired," said Nancy. "I tell you what, Ellen, you had better take to liking pork; you can't work on potatoes. I ain't tired a bit. There's somebody coming to the door again! Do run and open it, will you? my hands are wet. I wonder why folks can't come in without giving so much trouble?"

It was Thomas again, with a package for Ellen that had just come, he said, and Miss Alice thought she would like to have it directly.

Ellen thanked her, and thanked him, with a face from which all signs of weariness had fled away. The parcel was sealed up, and directed in a hand she was pretty sure she knew. Her fingers burned to break the seal; but she would not open it there, neither leave her work unfinished; she went on wiping the dishes with trembling hands and a beating heart.

"What's that?" said Nancy; "what did Thomas Grimes want? What have you got there?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, smiling; "something good, I guess."

"Something good? is it something to eat?"

"No," said Ellen, "I didn't mean anything to eat when I said something good; I don't think those are the best things."

To Ellen's delight she saw that her grandmother had forgotten about the reading, and was quietly taking short naps with her head against the chimney. So she put away the last dish, and then seized her package and flew upstairs. She was sure it had come from Lancaster; and she was right. It was a beautiful copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress," on the first leaf written, "To my little sister, Ellen Montgomery, from J. H."; and within the cover lay a letter. This letter Ellen read in the course of the next six days at least twice as many times; and never without crying over it.

"Alice has told me," (said John) "about your new troubles. There is said to be a time 'when clouds return after the rain.' I am sorry, my little sister, this time should come to you so early. I often think of you, and wish I could be near you. Still, dear Ellie, the good Husbandman knows what His plants want; do you believe that, and can you trust Him? They should have nothing but sunshine, if that was good for them. He knows it is not; so there come clouds and rains, and 'stormy wind fulfilling His will.' And what is it all for? 'Herein is my father glorified, *that ye bear much fruit*;' do not disappoint his purpose, Ellie. We shall have sunshine enough, by-and-by, but I know it is hard for so young a one as my little sister to look much forward; so do not look forward, Ellie; look up! look off unto Jesus, from all your duties, troubles, and wants; He will help you in them all. The more you look up to Him the more He will look down to you; and He especially said, 'Suffer *little children* to come unto Me'; you see you are particularly invited." Ellen was a long time upstairs, and when she came down it was with red eyes.

Mrs. Montgomery was now awake and asked for the reading again; and for three-quarters of an hour Ellen and she were quietly busy with

the Bible. Nancy, meanwhile, was downstairs washing the dairy things. When her grandmother released her, Ellen had to go up to wait upon her aunt; after which she went into the buttery and skimmed the cream, and got the pans ready for the evening milk. By this time it was five o'clock, and Nancy came in with the basket of dry clothes, at which Ellen looked with the sorrowful consciousness that they must be sprinkled and folded by-and-by, and ironed to-morrow. It happened, however, that Jane Huff came in just then with a quantity of hot short-cake for tea, and seeing the basket, she very kindly took the business of sprinkling and folding upon herself. This gave Ellen spirits to carry out a plan she had long had, to delight the whole family with some eggs scrambled in Margery's fashion; after the milk was strained and put away she went about it, while Nancy set the table. A nice bed of coals was prepared, the spider set over them, the eggs broken in, peppered and salted; and she began carefully to stir them as she had seen Margery do. But instead of acting right the eggs maliciously stuck fast to the spider and burned. Ellen was confounded.

"How much butter did you put in?" said Mr. Van Brunt, who had come in, and stood looking on.

"Butter?" said Ellen, looking up. "Oh, I forgot all about it! I ought to have put that in, oughtn't I? I'm sorry!"

"Never mind," said Mr. Van Brunt, "'tain't worth your being sorry about. Here, Nancy, clean us off this spider, and we'll try again."

"At this moment Miss Fortune was heard screaming; Ellen ran up.

"What did she want?" said Mr. Van Brunt, when she came down again.

"She wanted to know what was burning."

"Did you tell her?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did she say?"

"Said I mustn't use any more eggs without asking her."

"That ain't fair play," said Mr. Van Brunt; "you and I are the head of the house now, I take it. You just use as many on 'em as you've a mind; and all you spite I'll fetch you again from him. That's you, Nancy! Now, Ellen, here's the spider, try again; let's have plenty of butter in this time, and plenty of eggs, too." This time the eggs were scrambled to a nicety, and the supper met with great favour from all parties.

Ellen's day was done when the dishes were. The whole family went early to bed. She was weary ; but she could rest well. She had made her old grandmother comfortable ; she had kept the peace with Nancy ; she had pleased Mr. Van Brunt ; she had faithfully served her aunt. Her sleep was uncrossed by a dream, untroubled by a single jar of conscience. And her awaking to another day of labour, though by no means joyful, was yet not unhopeful or unhappy.

She had a hard trial a day or two after. It was in the end of the afternoon, she had her big apron on, and was in the buttery skimming the milk, when she heard the kitchen door open, and footsteps enter the kitchen. Out went little Ellen to see who it was, and there stood Alice and old Mr. Marshman ! He was going to take Alice home with him the next morning, and wanted Ellen to go too ; and they had come to ask her. Ellen knew it was impossible, that is, that it would not be right, and she said so ; and in spite of Alice's wistful look, and Mr. Marshman's insisting, she stood her ground. Not without some difficulty, and some glistening of the eyes. They had to give it up. Mr. Marshman then wanted to know what she meant by swallowing herself up in an apron in that sort of way ? so Ellen had him into the buttery and showed him what she had been about. He would see her skim several pans, and laughed at her prodigiously ; though there was a queer look about his eyes, too, all the time. And when he went away, he held her in his arms, and kissed her again and again ; and said that "some of these days he would take her away from her aunt, and she should have her no more." Ellen stood and looked after them till they were out of sight, and then went upstairs and had a good cry.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BROWNIE.

IN the course of time Miss Fortune showed signs of mending, and at last, towards the end of April, she was able to come downstairs. All parties hailed this event for different reasons ; even Nancy was grown tired of her regular life, and willing to have a change. Ellen's joy was, however, soon diminished by the terrible rumaging which took place. Miss Fortune's hands were yet obliged to lie still, but her eyes did double duty ; *they* were never known to be idle in the best of

times, and it seemed to Ellen now as if they were making amends for all their weeks of forced rest. Oh, those eyes! Dust was found where Ellen had never dreamed of looking for any; things were said to be "dreadfully in the way" where she had never found it out; disorder and dirt were groaned over where Ellen did not know the fact, or was utterly ignorant how to help it; waste was suspected where none had been, and carelessness charged where rather praise was due. But if there was small pleasure in pleasing her aunt, Ellen did earnestly wish to please God; she struggled against ill-temper, prayed against it; and though she often blamed herself in secret, she did so go through that week as to call forth Mr. Van Brunt's admiration, and even to stir a little the conscience of her aunt. Mr. Van Brunt comforted her with the remark that "it is darkest just before day," and so it proved. Before the week was at an end, Miss Fortune began, as she expressed it, to "take hold"; Nancy was sent away; Ellen's labours were much lightened; and the house was itself again.

The third of May came. For the first time in near two months, Ellen found in the afternoon that she could be spared awhile; there was no need to think twice what she would do with her leisure. Perhaps Margery could tell her something of Alice! Hastily and joyfully she exchanged her working-frock for a merino, put on nice shoes and stockings and ruff: again, and taking her bonnet and gloves to put on out of doors, away she ran. Who can tell how pleasant it seemed, after so many weeks, to be able to walk abroad again, and to walk to the mountain! Ellen snuffed the sweet air, skipped on the greensward, picked nosegays of grass and dandelion, and at last, unable to contain herself, set off to run. Fatigue soon brought this to a stop; then she walked more leisurely on, enjoying. It was a lovely spring day. Ellen's eyes were gladdened by it; she felt thankful in her heart that God had made everything so beautiful; she thought it was pleasant to think *He* had made them; pleasant to see in them everywhere so much of the wisdom and power and goodness of Him she looked up to with joy as her best friend. She felt quietly happy, and sure He would take care of her. Then a thought of Alice came into her head; she set off to run again, and kept it up this time till she got to the old house and ran round the corner. She stopped at the shed door, and went through into the lower kitchen.

"Why, Miss Ellen, dear!" exclaimed Margery, "if that isn't you! Aren't you come in the *very* nick of time! How *do* you do? I am *very* glad to see you—uncommon glad to be sure. What witch told

you to come here just now? Run in, run into the parlour and see what you'll find there."

"Has Alice come back?" cried Ellen. But Margéry only laughed and said, "Run in!"

Up the steps, through the kitchen, and across the hall Ellen ran, burst open the parlour door, and was in Alice's arms. There were others in the room; but Ellen did not seem to know it, clinging to her and holding her in a fast glad embrace, till Alice bade her look up and attend to somebody else. And then she was seized round the neck by little Ellen Chauncey; and then came her mother, and then Miss Sophia. The two children were overjoyed to see each other, while their joy was touching to see, from the shade of sorrow in the one, and of sympathy in the other. Ellen was scarcely less glad to see kind Mrs. Chauncey; Miss Sophia's greeting, too, was very affectionate. But Ellen returned to Alice, and rested herself in her lap with one hand round her neck, the other hand being in little Ellen's grasp.

"And now you are happy, I suppose?" said Miss Sophia, when they were thus placed.

"Very," said Ellen, smiling.

"Ah, but you'll be happier by-and-by," said Ellen Chauncey.

"Hush, Ellen!" said Miss Sophia; "what curious things children are! You didn't expect to find us all here, did you, Ellen Mont?"

"No, indeed, ma'am," said Ellen, drawing Alice's cheek nearer for another kiss.

"We have but just come, Ellie," said her sister. "I should not have been long in finding you out. My child, how thin you have got."

"Oh, I'll grow fat again now," said Ellen.

"How is Miss Fortune?"

"Oh, she is up again and well."

"Have you any reason to expect your father home, Ellen?" said Mrs. Chauncey.

"Yes, ma'am; Aunt Fortune says perhaps he will be here in a week."

"Then you are very happy in looking forward, aren't you?" said Miss Sophia, not noticing the cloud that had come over Ellen's brow.

Ellen hesitated, coloured, coloured more, and finally with a sudden motion hid her face against Alice.

"When did he sail, Ellie?" said Alice, gravely.

"In the *Duc d'Orleans*—he said he would—"

"When?"

"The fifth of April. Oh, I can't help it!" exclaimed Ellen, failing in the effort to control herself: she clasped Alice as if she feared even then the separating hand. Alice bent her head down and whispered words of comfort.

"Mamma!" said little Ellen Chauncey under her breath, and looking solemn to the last degree, "don't Ellen want to see her father?"

"She's afraid that he may take her away where she will not be with Alice any more; and you know she has no mother to go to."

"Oh!" said Ellen with a very enlightened face; "but he won't, will he?"

"I hope not; I think not."

Cheered again, the little girl, drew near and silently took one of Ellen's hands.

"We'll all not be parted, Ellie," said Alice, "you need not fear. If your father takes you away from your Aunt Fortune I think it will be only to give you to me. You need not fear yet."

"Mamma says so too, Ellen," said her little friend.

This was strong consolation. Ellen looked up and smiled.

"Now come with me," said Ellen Chauncey, pulling her hand, "I want you to show me something; let's go down to the garden, come! exercise is good for you."

"No, no," said her mother smiling, "Ellen has had exercise enough lately; you mustn't take her down to the garden now: you would find nothing there. Come here!"

A long whisper followed, which seemed to satisfy little Ellen and she ran out of the room. Some time passed in pleasant talk and telling all that had happened since they had seen each other; then little Ellen came back and called Ellen Montgomery to the glass door, saying she wanted her to look at something.

"It is only a horse we brought with us," said Miss Sophia. "Ellen thinks it is a great beauty, and can't rest till you have seen it."

Ellen went accordingly to the door. There to be sure was Thomas before it holding a pony bridled and saddled. He was certainly a very pretty little creature; brown all over except one white forefoot; his coat shone; it was so glossy; his limbs were fine; his eye gentle and bright; his tail long enough to please the children. He stood as quiet as a lamb, whether Thomas held him or not.

"Oh, what a beauty!" said Ellen; "what a lovely little horse!"

"Ain't he!" said Ellen Chauncey; "and he goes so beautifully besides, and never starts nor nothing; and he is as good-natured as a little dog."

"As a *good-natured* little dog," she means, Ellen," said Miss Sophia, "there are little dogs of very various character."

"Well, he looks good-natured," said Ellen. "What a pretty head! and what a beautiful new side-saddle, and all. I never saw such a dear little horse in my life. Is it yours, Alice?"

"No," said Alice, "it is a present to a friend of Mr. Marshman's."

"She'll be a very happy friend, I should think," said Ellen.

"That's what I said," said Ellen Chauncey, dancing up and down, "that's what I said. I said you'd be happier by-and-by, didn't I?"

"I?" said Ellen colouring.

"Yes, you—you are the friend it is for; it's for you, it's for you! you are grandpa's friend, aren't you?" she repeated, springing upon Ellen, and hugging her up in an ecstasy of delight.

"But it isn't really for me, is it?" said Ellen, now looking almost pale. "Oh, Alice!—"

"Come, come," said Miss Sophia, "what will papa say if I tell him you received his present so? Come, hold up your head! Put on your bonnet and try him; come, Ellen! let's see you."

Ellen did not know whether to cry or laugh, till she mounted the pretty pony; that settled the matter. Not Ellen Chauncey's unspeakable delight was as great as her own. She rode slowly up and down before the house, and once going would not have known how to stop if she had not recollected that the pony had travelled thirty miles that day and must be tired. Ellen took not another turn after that. She jumped down, and begged Thomas to take the tenderest care of him; patted his neck; ran into the kitchen to beg of Margery a piece of bread to give him from her hand; examined the new stirrup and housings, and the pony all over a dozen times; and after watching him as Thomas led him off, till he was out of sight, finally came back into the house with a face of marvellous contentment. She tried to fashion some message of thanks for the kind giver of the pony; but she wanted to express so much that no words would do. Mrs. Chauncey, however, smiled, and assured her she knew exactly what to say.

"That pony has been destined for you, Ellen," she said, "this year and more; but my father waited to have him thoroughly well broken. You need not be afraid of him; he is perfectly gentle and well-trained;

if he had not been sure of that my father would never have sent him ; though Mr. John is making such a horsewoman of you."

"I wish I could thank him," said Ellen ; "but I don't know how."

"What will you call him, Ellen?" said Miss Sophia. "My father has dubbed him 'George Marshman'; he says you will like that, as my brother is such a favourite of yours."

"He didn't *really*, did he?" said Ellen, looking from Sophia to Alice. "I needn't call him that, need I?"

"Not unless you like," said Miss Sophia, laughing, "you may change it ; but what *will* you call him?"

"I don't know," said Ellen very gravely, "he must have a name to be sure."

"But why don't you call him that?" said Ellen Chauncey ; "George is a very pretty name ; I like that ; I should call him 'Uncle George.'"

"Oh, I couldn't !" said Ellen, "I couldn't call him so ; I shouldn't like it at all."

"George Washington !" said Mrs. Chauncey.

"No, indeed !" said Ellen. "I guess I wouldn't !"

"Why ; is it too good, or not good enough?" said Miss Sophia.

"Too good ! A great deal too good for a horse ! I wouldn't for anything."

"How would Brandywine do then, since you are so patriotic?" said Miss Sophia, looking amused.

"I don't know whether I am patriotic," said Ellen, "but I won't call him Brandywine."

"No, I wouldn't either," said Ellen Chauncey ; "it isn't a pretty name. Call him Seraphine !—like Miss Angell's pony—that's pretty."

"No, no,—'Seraphine' ! nonsense !" said Miss Sophia ; "call him Benedict Arnold, Ellen ; and then it will be a relief to your mind to whip him."

"Whip him?" said Ellen, "I don't want to whip him, I am sure ; and I should be afraid to, besides."

"Hasn't John taught you that lesson yet?" said the young lady ; "he is perfect in it himself. Do you remember, Alice, the chastising he gave that fine black horse of ours we called the 'Black Prince' ?—a beautiful creature he was,—a more than a year ago ? My conscience ! he frightened me to death."

"I remember," said Alice ; "I remember I could not look on."

"What did he do that for?" said Ellen.

"What's the matter, Ellen Montgomery?" said Miss Sophia, laughing, "where did you get that long face from? Are you thinking of John or the horse?"

Ellen's eye turned to Alice.

"My dear Ellen," said Alice, smiling, though she spoke seriously, "it was necessary; it sometimes is necessary to do such things. You do not suppose John would do it cruelly or unnecessarily."

Ellen's face shortened considerably.

"But what had the horse been doing?"

"He had not been doing anything; he would *not* do, that was the trouble; he was as obstinate as a mule."

"My dear Ellen," said Alice, "it was no such terrible matter as Sophia's words have made you believe. It was a clear case of obstinacy. The horse was resolved to have his own way and not to do what his rider required of him; it was necessary that either the horse or the man should give up; and as John has no fancy for giving up, he carried his point, - partly by management, partly, I confess, by a judicious use of the whip and spur; but there was no such furious flagellation as Sophia seems to mean, and which a good horseman would scarce be guilty of."

"A very determined 'use'," said Miss Sophia. "I advise you, Ellen, not to trust your pony to Mr. John; he will have no mercy on him."

"Sophia is laughing, Ellen," said Alice. "You and I know John, do we not?"

"Then he did right?" said Ellen.

"Perfectly right—except in mounting the horse at all, which I never wished him to do. No one on the place would ride him."

"He carried John beautifully all the day after that though," said Miss Sophia, "and I daresay he might have ridden him to the end of the chapter if you would have let papa give him to him. But he was of no use to anybody else. Howard couldn't manage him—I suppose he was too lazy. Papa was delighted enough that day to have given John anything. And I can tell you Black Prince the second is spirited enough; I am afraid you won't like him."

"John has a present of a horse too, Ellen," said Alice.

"Has he?—from Mr. Marshman?"

"Yes."

"I am very glad! Oh, what rides we can take now, can't we, Alice? We shan't want to borrow Jenny's pony any more. What kind of a horse is Mr. John's?"

"Black,--perfectly black."

"Is he handsome?"

"Very."

"Is his name Black Prince?"

"Yes."

Ellen began to consider the possibility of calling her pony the Brown Princess, or by some similar title--the name of John's two chargers seeming the very most striking a horse could be known by.

"Don't forget, Alice," said Mrs Chauncey, "to tell John to stop for him on his way home. It will give us a chance of seeing him, which is not a common pleasure, in any sense of the term."

They went back to the subject of the name, which Ellen pondered with uneasy visions of John and her poor pony sitting through her head. The little horse was very hard to fit, or else Ellen's taste was very hard to suit; a great many names were proposed, none of which were to her mind. Charley, and Cherry, and Brown, and Dash, and Jumper,--but she said they had "John" and "Jenny" already in Thirlwall, and she didn't want a "Charley"; "Brown" was not pretty and she hoped he wouldn't "dash" at anything, nor be a "jumper" when she was on his back. Cherry she mused awhile about, but it wouldn't do.

"Call him Fairy," said Ellen Chauncey; "that's a pretty name. Ma'ma says she used to have a horse called Fairy. Do, Ellen! call him Fairy."

"No," said Ellen; "he can't have a lady's name--that's the trouble."

"I have it, Ellen!" said Alice; "I have a name for you, call him The Brownie."

"The Brownie?" said Ellen.

"Yes--brownies are male fairies; and brown is his colour; so how will that do?"

It was soon decided that it would do very well. It was simple, descriptive, and not common; Ellen made up her mind that "The Brownie" should be his name. No sooner given, it began to grow dear. Ellen's face quitted its look of anxious gravity and came out into the broadest and fullest satisfaction. She never showed joy boisterously; but there was a light in her eye which brought many a smile into those of her friends as they sat round the tea-table.

After tea it was necessary to go home, much to the sorrow of all parties. Ellen knew, however, it would not do to stay; Miss Fortune

was but just got well, and perhaps ahead, thinking herself ill used. She put on her things

"Are you going to take your pony home with you?" enquired Miss Sophia

"Oh, no, m'am, not to night. I must see about a place for him; and besides, poor fellow, he is tired, I dare say."

"I do believe you would take more care of his legs than your own," said Miss Sophia

"But you'll be here to-morrow early, Lillie?"

"Oh, won't I!" exclaimed Ellen as she sprang to Alice's neck; "as early as I can, at least, I don't know when Aunt Fortune will have done with me."

The way home seemed as nothing. If she was tired she did not know it. The Brownie, the Brownie, the thought of him carried her as cleverly over the ground as his very back would have done. She came running into the chip yard

"Hollo!" cried Mr. Van Brunt, who was standing under the apple-tree cutting a piece of wood for the tongue of the ox cart, which had been broken, "I'm glad to see you *can* run. I was afraid you'd hardly be able to stand by this time, but there you come like a young deer!"

"Oh, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen, coming close up to him and speaking in an undertone, "you don't know what a present I have had! What do you think Mr. Maishman has sent me from Ventnor?"

"Couldn't guess," said Mr. Van Brunt, resting the end of his pole on the log and chipping at it with his hatchet, "never guessed anything in my life, what is it?"

"He has sent me the most beautiful little horse you ever saw!—for my own—fine to ride, and a new beautiful saddle and bridle; you never saw anything so beautiful, Mr. Van Brunt, he is all brown, with one white fore foot, and I've named him 'The Brownie'; and oh, Mr. Van Brunt, do you think Aunt Fortune will let him come here?"

Mr. Van Brunt chipped away at his pole, and was looking very good-humoured

"Because you know I couldn't have half the good of him if he had to stay away from me up on the mountain. I shall want to ride him every day. Do you think Aunt Fortune will let him be kept here, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"I guess she will," said Mr. Van Brunt, soberly, and his tone said to Ellen "I will, if she don't."

"Then will you ask her and see about it? if you please, Mr Van Brunt I'd rather you would. And you won't have him put to plough or anything, will you, Mr Van Brunt? Miss Sophie says it would spoil him."

"I'll plough myself first," said Mr Van Brunt, with his half smile, "there shan't be a turn of his coat turned the wrong way. I'll see to him—as if he was a prince."

"Oh, think you do, Mr Van Brunt? How good you are. Then I shall not speak about him at all till you do, remember. I am very much obliged to you, Mr Van Brunt."

Ellen ran. She got a chiding for her long stay, but it fell upon ears that could not hear. The Brownie came like a shield between her and all trouble. She smiled at her aunt's hard words as if they had been sugar-plums. And her sleep that night might have been prairie land, for the multitude of horses of all sorts that chased through her.

"Have you heard the news?" said Mr Van Brunt, when he had got his second cup of coffee at breakfast next morning.

"No," said Miss Fortune. "What news?"

"There isn't as much news as there used to be when I was young," said the old lady, "seems to me I don't hear nothing now days."

"You might if you'd keep your ears open, mother. *What* news, Mr Van Brunt?"

"Why, here's Ellen got a splendid little horse sent her up out from some of her great friends. A *ushchuk*."

"Mr Mushman," said Ellen.

"Mr Mushman. There isn't the like in the country, as I've heard tell, and I expect next thing she'll be flying over all the fields and fences like smoke."

There was a meaning silence. Ellen's heart beat.

"What's going to be done with him, do you suppose?" said Miss Fortune. Her look said, "If you think I'm coming round you are mistaken."

"Humph!" said Mr Van Brunt, slowly, "I s'pose he'll cut grass in the meadow,—and there'll be a place fixed for him in the stables."

"Not in *my* stables," said the lady, shortly.

"No,—in mine," said Mr Van Brunt half smiling, "and I'll settle with you about it by and by, when we square up our accounts."

Miss Fortune was very much vexed, Ellen could see that, but she said no more, good or bad, about the matter, so the Brownie was

allowed to take quiet possession of meadow and stables; to his mistress's unbounded joy.

Anybody that knew Mr. Van Bruñt would have been surprised to hear what he said that morning; for he was thought to be quite as keen a looker after the main chance as Miss Fortune herself, only somehow it was never laid against him as it was against her. However that might be, it was plain he took pleasure in keeping his word about the pony. Ellen herself could not have asked more careful kindness for her favourite than the Brownie had from every man and boy about the farm.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TIMOTHY AND HIS MASTER.

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY did *not* come the next week, nor the week after; and what is more, the "Duck Dorleens," as his sister called the ship in which he had taken passage, was never heard of from that time. She sailed duly on the fifth of April, as they learned from the papers; but whatever became of her she never reached port. It remained a doubt whether Captain Montgomery had actually gone in her; and Ellen had many weeks of anxious watching, first for himself, and then for news of him in case he were still in France. None ever came. Anxiety gradually faded into uncertainty; and by midsummer no doubt of the truth remained in any mind. If Captain Montgomery had been alive, he would certainly have written, if not before, on learning the fate of the vessel in which he had told his friends to expect him home.

Ellen rather felt that she was an orphan than that she had lost her father. She had never learned to love him, he had never given her much cause. Comparatively a small portion of her life had been passed in his society, and she looked back to it as the least agreeable of all; and it had not been possible for her to expect with pleasure his return to America and visit to Thirlwall; she dreaded it. Life had nothing now worse for her than a separation from Alice and John Humphreys; she feared her father might take her away and put her in some dreadful boarding-school, or carry her about the world wherever he went, a wretched wanderer from everything good and pleasant. The knowledge of his death had less pain for her than the removal of this fear brought relief.

Ellen felt sometimes, soberly and sadly, that she was thrown upon

the wide world now. To all intents and purposes she had been a year and three-quarters before; but it was something to have a father and mother living even on the other side of the world. Now, Miss Fortune was her sole guardian and owner. However, she could hardly realise that, with Alice and John so near at hand. Without reasoning much about it, she felt tolerably secure that they would take care of her interests, and make good their claim to interfere if ever need were.

Ellen and her little horse grew more and more fond of each other. This friendship, no doubt, was a comfort to the Brownie; but to his mistress it made a large part of the pleasure of her every-day life. To visit him was her delight, at all hours, early and late; and it is to the Brownie's credit that he always seemed as glad to see her as she was to see him. At any time Ellen's voice would bring him from the far end of the meadow where he was allowed to run. He would come trotting up at her call, and stand to have her scratch his forehead or pat him and talk to him; and though the Brownie could not answer her speeches, he certainly seemed to hear them with pleasure. Then throwing up his head he would bound off, take a turn in the field, and come back again to stand as still as a lamb as long as she stayed there herself. Now and then, when she had a little more time, she would cross the fence and take a walk with him; and there, with his nose just at her elbow, wherever she went the Brownie went after her. After a while there was no need that she should call him; if he saw or heard her at a distance it was enough; he would come running up directly. Ellen loved him dearly.

Many, many, were the hours of enjoyment she had upon his back. Ellen went nowhere but upon the Brownie. Alice made her a riding-dress of dark gingham; and it was the admiration of the country to see her trotting or cantering by, all alone, and always looking happy. Ellen soon found that if the Brownie was to do her much good she must learn to saddle and bridle him herself. This was very awkward at first, but there was no help for it. Mr. Van Brunt showed her how to manage, and after a while it became quite easy. She used to call the Brownie to the bar-place, put the bridle on, and let him out; and then he would stand motionless before her while she fastened the saddle on; looking round sometimes as if to make sure that it was she herself, and giving a little kind of satisfied neigh when he saw that it was. Ellen's heart began to dance as soon as she felt him moving under her; and once off and away on the docile and spirited

little animal, over the roads, through the lanes, up and down the hills, her horse her only companion, but having the most perfect understanding with him, both Ellen and the Brownie cast care to the winds. "I do believe," said Mr. Van Brunt, "that critter would a *leetle* rather have Ellen on his back than not." He was the Brownie's next best friend. Miss Fortune never said anything to him or of him.

Ellen, however, reaped a reward for her faithful steadiness to duty while her aunt was ill. Things were never after that as they had been before. She was looked on with a different eye. To be sure Miss Fortune tasked her as much as ever, spoke as sharply, was as ready to scold if anything went wrong; all that was just as it used to be; but beneath all that Ellen felt with great satisfaction that she was trusted and believed. She was no longer an interloper, in everybody's way; she was not watched and suspected; her aunt treated her as one of the family and a person to be depended on. It was a very great comfort to little Ellen's life. Miss Fortune even owned that "she believed she was an honest child and meant to do right," a great deal from her; Miss Fortune was never over forward to give anyone the praise of *honesty*. Ellen now went out and came in without feeling she was an alien. And though her aunt was always bent on keeping herself and everybody else at work, she did not now show any particular desire for breaking off Ellen from her studies; and was generally willing when the work was pretty well done up that she should saddle the Brownie and be off to Alice or Mrs. Vawse.

August had come, and John was daily expected home. One morning Miss Fortune was in the lower kitchen, up to the elbows in making a rich fall cheese; Ellen was busy upstairs, when her aunt shouted to her to "come and see what was all that splashing and crashing in the garden." Ellen ran out.

"Oh, Aunt Fortune," said she, "Timothy has broken down the fence, and got in."

"Timothy!" said Miss Fortune, "what Timothy?"

"Why, Timothy, the near ox," said Ellen, laughing; "he has knocked down the fence over there where it was low, you know."

"The near ox!" said Miss Fortune, "I wish he warn't quite so near this time. Mercy! he'll be at the corn and over everything. Run and drive him into the barn-yard, can't you?"

But Ellen stood still and shook her head. "He wouldn't stir for

me," she said ; "and besides I am as afraid of that ox as can be. If it was Clover I wouldn't mind."

"But he'll have every bit of the corn eaten up in five minutes! Where's Mr. Van Brunt?"

"I heard him say he was going home till noon," said Ellen.

"And Sam Larkens is gone to mill—and Johnny Low is laid up with the shakes. Very careless of Mr. Van Brunt!" said Miss Fortune, drawing her arms out of the cheese-tub, wringing off the whey. "I wish he'd mind his own oxen. There was no business to be a low place in the fence! Well, come along! you ain't afraid, with me, I suppose?"

Ellen followed, at a respectful distance. Miss Fortune, however, feared the face of neither man nor beast; she pulled up a bean pole, and made such a show of fight that Timothy, after looking at her a little, fairly turned tail, and marched out at the breach he had made. Miss Fortune went after, and rested not till she had driven him quite into the meadow; get him into the barn-yard she could not.

"You ain't worth a straw, Ellen!" said she when she came back; "couldn't you ha' headed him and driv' him into the barn-yard? Now, that plaguey beast will just be back again by the time I get well to work. He ha'n't done much mischief yet—there's Mr. Van Brunt's salary, he's made a pretty mess of; I'm glad o' that! He should ha' put potatoes, as I told him. I don't know what's to be done—I can't be leaving my cheese to run and mind the garden every minute, if it was full of Timothys; and *you'd* be scared if a mosquito flew at you; you had better go right off for Mr. Van Brunt, and fetch him straight home—serve him right! he has no business to leave things so. Run along, and don't let the grass grow under your feet!"

Ellen wisely thought her pony's feet would do the business quicker. She ran and put on her gingham dress, and saddled and bridled the Brownie in three minutes; but before setting off she had to scream to her aunt that Timothy was just coming round the corner of the barn again; and Miss Fortune rushed out to the garden as Ellen and Brownie walked down to the gate.

The weather was fine, and Ellen thought with herself it was all right and that blew no good. She was getting a nice ride in the early morning that she would not have had but for Timothy's lawless behaviour. To ride at that time was particularly pleasant and rare; and forgetting how she had left poor Miss Fortune between the ox and the cheese-tub, Ellen and the Brownie cantered off in excellent spirits

She looked in vain, as she passed his grounds, to see Mr. Van Brunt in the garden or about the barn. She went on to the little gate of the court-yard, dismounted, and led the Brownie in. Here she was met by Nancy, who came running from the way of the barn-yard.

"How d'ye do, Nancy?" said Ellen; "where's Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Goodness! Ellen! what do you want?"

"I want Mr. Van Brunt, where is he?"

"Mr. Van Brunt! he's out in the barn, but he's used himself up."

"Used himself up! what do you mean?"

"Why, he's fixed himself in fine style; he's fell through the trap-door and broke his leg."

"Oh, Nancy!" screamed Ellen, "he hasn't! how could he?"

"Why, easy enough, if he didn't look where he was going, there's so much hay on the floor. But it's a pretty bad place to fall."

"How do you know his leg is broken?"

"'Cause he says so, and anybody with eyes can see it must be. I'm going over to Hitchcocks' to get somebody to come and help in with him! for you know me and Mrs. Van Brunt ain't Samsons."

"Where is Mrs. Van Brunt?"

"She's out there—in a terrible do."

Nancy sped on to the Hitchcocks'; and greatly frightened and distressed, Ellen ran over to the barn, trembling like an aspen. Mr. Van Brunt was lying in the lower floor, just where he had fallen; one leg doubled under him in such a way as left no doubt it must be broken. He had lain there some time before anyone found him; and on trying to change his position when he saw his mother's distress, he had fainted from pain. She sat by weeping most bitterly. Ellen could bear but one look at Mr. Van Brunt; that one sickened her. She went up to his poor mother, and getting down on her knees by her side put both arms round her neck.

"Don't cry so, dear Mrs. Van Brunt" (Ellen was crying so she could hardly speak herself), "pray don't do so! he'll be better—Oh, what shall we do?"

"Oh, ain't it dreadful!" said poor Mrs. Van Brunt. "Oh, 'Brahm, 'Brahm! my son! the best son that ever was to me—Oh, to see him there—ain't it dreadful? he's dying."

"Oh, no, he isn't," said Ellen, "oh, no, he isn't! what shall we do, Mrs. Van Brunt? what shall we do?"

"The doctor! said Mrs. Van Brunt, "he said send for the doctor;

but I can't go, and there's nobody to send. Oh, he'll die! Oh, my dear 'Brahm; I wish it was me!"

"What doctor?" said Ellen; "I'll find somebody to go; tell me what doctor?"

"Dr. Gibson, he said; but he's away off to Thirlwall; and he's been lying here all the morning a'ready! nobody found him—he couldn't make us hear. Oh, isn't it dreadful!"

"Oh, don't cry so, dear Mrs. Van Brunt," said Ellen, pressing her cheek to the poor old lady's; "he'll be better—he will! I've got the Brownie here, and I'll ride over to Mrs. Hitchcock's and get somebody to go right away for the doctor. I won't be long, we'll have him here in a little while; *don't* feel so bad."

"You're a dear blessed darling!" said the old lady, hugging and kissing her, "if ever there was one. Make haste, dear, if you love him! He loves you."

Ellen stayed but to give her another kiss. Trembling so that she could hardly stand she made her way back to the house, led out the Brownie again, and set off full speed for Mrs. Hitchcock's. It was well her pony was sure-footed, for letting the reins hang, Ellen bent over his neck crying bitterly, only urging him now and then to greater speed; till at length she feeling that she had something to do came to her help. She straightened herself, gathered up her reins, and by the time she reached Mrs. Hitchcock's was looking calm again, though very sad, and very earnest. She did not alight, but stopped before the door and called Jenny. Jenny came out, expressing her pleasure.

"Dear Jenny," said Ellen, "isn't there somebody here that will go right off to Thirlwall for Dr. Gibson? Mr. Van Brunt has broken his leg, I am afraid, and wants the doctor directly."

"Why, dear Ellen," said Jenny, "the men have just gone off this minute to Mrs. Van Brunt's. Nancy was here for them to come and help move him in a great hurry. How did it happen? I couldn't get anything out of Nancy."

"He fell down through the trap-door. But, dear Jenny, isn't there *anybody* about? Oh," said Ellen, clasping her hands, "I want somebody to go for the doctor *so* much."

"There ain't a living soul!" said Jenny; "two of the men and all the teams are 'way on the other side of the hill ploughing, and pa and June, and Black Bill have gone over, as I told you; but I don't believe they'll be enough. Where's his leg broke?"

"I didn't meet them," said Ellen; "I came away only a little while after Nancy."

"They went 'cross lots, I guess,—that's how it was; and that's the way Nancy got the start of you."

"What shall I do?" said Ellen. She could not bear to wait till they returned; if she rode back she might miss them again, besides the delay; and then a man on foot would make a long journey of it. Jenny told her of a house or two where she might try for a messenger; but they were strangers to her; she could not make up her mind to ask such a favour of them. Her friends were too far out of the way.

"I'll go myself!" she said, suddenly. "Tell 'em, dear Jenny, will you, that I have gone for Dr. Gibson, and that I'll bring him back as quick as ever I can. I know the road to Thirlwall."

"But Ellen! you mustn't," said Jenny; "I am afraid to have you go all that way alone. Wait till the men come back, they won't be long."

"No, I can't, Jenny," said Ellen, "I can't wait; I must go. You needn't be afraid. Tell 'em I'll be as quick as I can."

"But see, Ellen!" cried Jenny, as she was moving off. "I don't like to have you."

"I must, Jenny. Never mind."

"But see, Ellen!" cried Jenny, again, "if you *will* go—if you don't find Dr. Gibson just get Dr. Marshchalk, he's every bit as good, and some folks think he's better; he'll do just as well. Good-bye!"

Ellen nodded and rode off. There was a little fluttering of the heart at taking so much upon herself; she had never been to Thirlwall but once since the first time she saw it. But she thought of Mr. Van Brunt, suffering for help which could not be obtained, and it was impossible for her to hesitate. "I am sure I am doing right," she thought, "and what is there to be afraid of? If I ride two miles alone, why shouldn't I four? And I am doing right—God will take care of me." Ellen earnestly asked Him to do so; and after that she felt pretty easy. "Now, dear Brownie," said she, patting his neck, "you and I have work to do to-day, behave like a good little horse as you are." The Brownie answered with a little cheerful kind of neigh, as much as to say, Never fear me! They trotted on nicely.

But nothing could help that being a disagreeable ride. Do what she would, Ellen felt a little afraid when she found herself on a long piece of road where she had never been alone before. There were

not many houses on the way; the few there were looked strange; Ellen did not know exactly where she was, or how near the end of her journey; it seemed a long one. She felt rather lonely; a little shy of meeting people, and yet a little unwilling to have the intervals between them so very long. She repeated to herself, "I am doing right—God will take care of me," still there was a nervous trembling at heart. Sometimes she would pat her pony's neck and say, "Trot on, dear Brownie! we'll soon be there!" by way of cheering herself; for certainly the Brownie needed no cheering, and was trotting on bravely. Then the thought of Mr. Van Brunt, as she had seen him lying on the barn-floor, made her feel sick and miserable; many tears fell during her ride when she remembered him. "Heaven will be a good place," thought little Ellen as she went; "there will be no sickness, no pain, no sorrow; but Mr. Van Brunt!—I wonder if he is fit to go to heaven?" This was a new matter of thought and uneasiness, not now for the first time in Ellen's mind; and so the time passed till she crossed the bridge over the little river, and saw the houses of Thirlwall stretching away in the distance. Then she felt comfortable.

Long before she had bethought her that she did not know where to find Dr. Gibson, and had forgotten to ask Jenny. For one instant Ellen drew bridle, but it was too far to go back, and she recollected, anybody could tell her where the doctor lived. When she got to Thirlwall, however, Ellen found that she did not like to ask *anybody*; she remembered her old friend Mrs. Forbes of the Star Inn, and resolved she would go there in the first place. She rode slowly up the street, looking carefully till she came to the house. There was no mistaking it; there was the very same big star over the front door that had caught her eye from the coach-window, and there was the very same boy, or man, Sam, lounging on the sidewalk. Ellen reined up, and asked him to ask Mrs. Forbes if she would be so good as to come out to her for one minute. Sam gave her a long Yankee look and disappeared, coming back again directly with the landlady.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Forbes?" said Ellen, holding out her hand; "don't you know me? I am Ellen Montgomery—that you were so kind to, and gave me bread and milk—when I first came here,—Miss Fortune's——"

"Oh, bless your dear little heart!" cried the landlady; "don't I know you! and ain't I glad to see you! I must have a kiss. Bless you! I couldn't mistake you in Jerusalem, but the sun was in my eyes

in that way I was a'most blind. But ain't you grown though ! Forget you? I guess I ha'n't ! there's one o' your friends wouldn't let me do that in a hurry ; if I ha'n't seen you I've heered on you. But what are you sitting there in the sun for? Come in—come in—and I'll give you something better than bread and milk this time. Come, jump down."

"Oh, I can't, Mrs. Forbes," said Ellen ; "I'm in a great hurry. Mr. Van Brunt has broken his leg, and I want to find the doctor."

"Mr. Van Brunt !" cried the landlady. "Broken his leg ! The land's sakes ! how did he do that? *he* too !"

"He fell down through the trap-door in the barn ; and I want to get Dr. Gibson as soon as I can to come to him. Where does he live, Mrs. Forbes?"

"Dr. Gibson? You won't catch him to hum, dear ; he's flying round somewhere. But how come the trap-door to be open? and how happened Mr. Van Brunt not to see it afore he put his foot in it? Dear ! I declare I'm real sorry to hear you tell. How happened it, darlin' ? I'm curious to hear."

"I don't know, Mrs. Forbes," said Ellen ; "but oh, where shall I find Dr. Gibson? Do tell me ! He ought to be there now. Oh, help me ! Where shall I go for him?"

"Well, I declare," said the landlady, stepping back a pace ; "I don't know as I can tell. There ain't no sort of likelihood that he's to hum at this time o' day. Sam ! you lazy feller, you ha'n't got nothing to do but to gape at folks ; ha' you seen the doctor go by this forenoon?"

"I seen him go down to Mis' Perriman's," said Sam. "Mis' Perriman was a dyin', Jim Barstow said."

"How long since?" said his mistress.

But Sam shuffled and shuffled, looked every way but at Ellen or Mrs. Forbes, and "didn' know."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Forbes, turning to Ellen, "I don't know but you might about as well go down to the post-office ; but if I was you, I'd just get Dr. Marshchalk instead ! He's a smarter man than Dr. Gibson any day in the year ; and he ain't quite so awful high neither, and that's something. I'd get Dr. Marshchalk ; they say there ain't the like o' him in the country for settin' bones ; it's quite a gift—he takes to it natural like."

But Ellen said Mr. Van Brunt wanted Dr. Gibson, and if she could she must find him.

"Well," said Mrs. Forbes, "everyone has their fancies. I wouldn't let Dr. Gibson come near me with a pair of tongs; but anyhow, if you must have him, your best way is to go right straight down to the post-office and ask for him there; maybe you'll catch him."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Ellen. "Where is the post-office?"

"It's that white-faced house down the street," said the landlady, pointing with her finger where Ellen saw no lack of white-faced houses. "You see that big red store with the man standing out in front?—the next white house below, that is Mis' Perriman's; just run right in and ask for Dr. Gibson. Good-bye, dear, I'm real sorry you can't come in. That first white house."

Glad to get free, Ellen rode smartly down to the post-office. Nobody before the door; there was nothing for it but to get off here and go in; she did not know the people either. "Never mind! wait for me a minute, dear Brownie, like a good little horse as you are!"

No fear of the Brownie. He stood as if he did not mean to budge again in a century. At first going in Ellen saw nobody in the post-office; presently, at an opening in a kind of boxed-up place in one corner, a face looked out and asked what she wanted.

"Is Dr. Gibson here?"

"No," said the owner of the face, with a disagreeable kind of smile.

"Isn't this Miss Perriman's house?"

"You are in the right box, my dear, and no mistake," said the young man; "but then it ain't Dr. Gibson's house, you know."

"Can you tell me, sir, where I can find him?"

"Can't indeed. The doctor never tells me where he is going, and I never ask him. I am sorry I didn't this morning, for your sake."

The way, and the look, made the words extremely disagreeable, and furthermore Ellen had an uncomfortable feeling that neither was new to her. Where *had* she seen the man before? She puzzled herself to think. Where but in a dream had she seen that bold, ill-favoured face, that horrible smile, that sandy hair,—she knew! It was Mr. Saunders, the man who had sold her the merino at St. Clair and Fleury's. She knew him; and she was very sorry to see that he knew her. And she desired now was to get out of the house and away; but on turning she saw another man, older and respectable-looking, whose face encouraged her to ask again if Dr. Gibson was there. He was not the man said; he had been there and gone.

"Do you know where I should be likely to find him, sir?"

"No, I don't," said he. "Who wants him?"

"I want to see him, sir."

"For yourself?"

"No, sir; Mr. Van Brunt has broken his leg, and wants Dr. Gibson to come directly and set it."

"Mr. Van Brunt," said he, "Farmer Van Brunt that lives down towards the Cat's Back? I'm very sorry! How did it happen?"

Ellen told as shortly as possible, and again begged to know where she might look for Dr. Gibson.

"Well," said he, "the best plan I can think of will be for you--- How did you come here?"

"I came on horseback, sir."

"Ah, well, the best plan will be for you to ride up to his house; maybe he'll have left word there; and anyhow, *you* can leave word for him to come down as soon as he gets home. Do you know where the doctor lives?"

"No, sir."

"Come here," said he, pulling her to the door. "You can't see it from here; but you must ride up street till you have passed two churches, one on the right hand first, and then a good piece beyond you'll come to another red-brick one on the left hand; and Dr. Gibson lives in the next block but one after that, on the other side. Anybody will tell you the house. Is that your horse?"

"Yes, sir. I'm very much obliged to you."

"Well, I will say! if you ha'n't the prettiest fit out in Thirlwall. Shall I help you? will you have a chaper?"

"No, I thank you, sir; I'll bring him up to this step; it will do just as well. I am *very* much obliged to you, sir."

He did not seem to hear her thanks; he was all eyes; and with his clerk stood looking after her till she was out of sight.

Poor Ellen found it a long way up to the doctor's. The post-office was near the lower end of the town, and the doctor's house was near the upper; she passed one church and then the other; but there was a long distance between, or what she thought so. Happily the Brownie did not seem tired at all; his little mistress *was* tired and disheartened too. And there all this time was poor Mr. Van Brunt lying without a doctor! She could not bear to think of it.

She jumped down when she came to the block she had been told of, and easily found the house where Dr. Gibson lived. She knocked at the door. A grey-haired woman with a very dead-and-alive face presented herself. Ellen asked for the doctor

"He ain't to hum."

"When will he be at home?"

"Couldn't say."

"Before dinner?"

The woman shook her head. "Guess not till late in the day."

"Where is he gone?"

"He is gone to Babcock—gone to 'attend a consummation,' I guess, he told me—Babcock is a considerable long way."

Ellen thought a minute.

"Can you tell me where Dr. Marshchalk lives?"

"I guess you'd better wait till Dr. Gibson comes back, ha'n't you?" said the woman, coaxingly; "he'll be along by-and-by. If you'll leave me your name I'll give it to him."

"I cannot wait," said Ellen, "I am in a dreadful hurry. Will you be so good as to tell me where Dr. Marshchalk lives?"

"Well—if so be you're in such a takin', you can't wait—you know where Mrs. Forbes lives?"

"At the inn?—the Star—yes."

"He lives a few doors this side o' her'n; you'll know it the first minute you set your eyes on it—it's painted a bright yaller."

Ellen thanked her—once more mounted, and rode down the street.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEREIN THE BLACK PRINCE ARRIVES OPPORTUNELY.

THE yellow door, as the old woman had said, was not to be mistaken. Again Ellen dismounted and knocked; then she heard a slow step coming along the entry, and the pleasant kind face of Miss Janet appeared at the open door. It was a real refreshment, and Ellen wanted one.

"Why, it's dear little—ain't it—her that lives down to Miss Fortune Emerson's?—yes, it is; come in, dear; I'm very glad to see you. How's all at your house?"

"Is the doctor at home, ma'am?"

"No, dear, he ain't to home just this minute, but he'll be in directly. Come in,—is that your horse?—just kitch him to the post there so he won't run away, and come right in. Who did you come along with?"

"Nobody, ma'am; I came alone," said Ellen, while she obeyed Miss Janet's directions.

"Alone! on that 'ere little skittish creeter?—he's as handsome as a picture too—why, do tell if you warn't afraid? it a'most scares me to think of it."

"I was a little afraid," said Ellen, as she followed Miss Janet along the entry,—“but I couldn't help that. You think the doctor will soon be in, ma'am?”

"Yes, dear, sure of it," said Miss Janet, kissing Ellen, and taking off her bonnet; "he won't be five minutes, for it's a'most dinner-time. What's the matter, dear? is Miss Fortune sick again?"

"No, ma'am," said Ellen, sadly, "Mr. Van Brunt has fallen through the trap-door in the barn and broken his leg."

"Oh!" cried the old lady, with a face of real horror, "you don't tell me! Fell through the trap-door! and he ain't a light weight neither. Oh, that is a lamentable event! And how is the poor old mother, dear?"

"She is very much troubled, ma'am," said Ellen, crying at the remembrance; "and he has been lying ever since early this morning without anybody to set it; I have been going round and round for a doctor this ever so long."

"Why, warn't there nobody to come but you, you poor lamb?" said Miss Janet.

"No, ma'am; nobody quick enough; and I had the Brownie, there, and so I came."

"Well, cheer up, dear! the doctor will be here now, and we'll send him right off; he won't be long about his dinner, I'll engage. Come and set in this big cheer—do—it'll rest you; I see you're a'most tired out, and it ain't a wonder. There, don't that feel better? now I'll give you a little sup of dinner, for you won't want to swallow it at the rate Leander will his'n. Dear! dear! to think of poor Mr. Van Brunt. He's a likely man, too; I'm very sorry for him and his poor mother. A kind body she is as ever the sun shined upon."

"And so is he," said Ellen.

"Well, so I dare say," said Miss Janet, "but I don't know so much about him; howsoever, he's got everybody's good word as far as I know; he's a likely man."

The little room in which Miss Janet had brought Ellen was very plainly furnished indeed, but as neat as hands could make it. The carpet was as crumbless and lintless as if meals were never taken

there nor work seen ; and yet a little table ready set for dinner forbade the one conclusion, and a huge basket of naperies in one corner showed that Miss Janet's industry did not spend itself in housework alone. Before the fire stood a pretty good-sized kettle, and a very appetising smell came from it to Ellen's nose. In spite of sorrow and anxiety her ride had made her hungry. It was not without pleasure that she saw her kind hostess arm herself with a deep plate and tin dipper, and carefully taking off the pot-cover so that no drops might fall on the hearth, proceed to ladle out a goodly supply of what Ellen knew was that excellent country dish called pot-pie. The pieces of crust were white and light like new bread, the very tit-bits of the meat she culled out for Ellen ; and the soup-gravy poured over all would have met even Miss Fortune's wishes, from its just degree of richness and exact seasoning. Smoking hot it was placed before Ellen on a little stand by her easy chair, with some nice bread and butter ; and presently Miss Janet poured her out a cup of tea ; " for," she said, " Leander never could take his dinner without it." Ellen's appetite needed no silver fork. Tea and pot-pie were never better liked ; yet Miss Janet's enjoyment was perhaps greater still. She sat talking and looking at her little visitor with secret but immense satisfaction.

" Have you heard what fine doings we're agoing to have here by-and-by ?" said she. " The doctor's tired of me ; he's going to get a new housekeeper ; he's going to get married some of these days."

" Is he !" said Ellen. " Not to Jenny ?"

" Yes, indeed, he is—to Jenny—Jenny Hitchcock ; and a nice little wife she'll make him. You're a great friend of Jenny, I know."

" How soon ?" said Ellen.

" Oh, not just yet—by-and-by—after we get a little smarted up, I guess ; before a great while. Don't you think he'll be a happy man ?"

Ellen could not help wondering, as the doctor just then came in, and she looked up at his unfortunate three-cornered face, whether Jenny would be a happy woman. But as people often do, she only judged from the outside ; Jenny had not made such a bad choice after all.

The doctor said he would go directly to Mr. Van Brunt after he had been over to Mrs. Sibnorth's ; it wouldn't be a minute. Ellen meant to ride back in his company ; and having finished her dinner waited now only for him. But the one minute passed—two minutes—ten—twenty—she waited impatiently, but he came not.

"I'll tell you how it must be," said his sister, "he's gone off without his dinner, calculating to get it at Miss Hitchcock's—he'd be glad of the chance. That's how it is, dear; and you'll have to ride home alone; I'm real sorry. S'pose you stop till evening, and I'll make the doctor go along with you. But, oh dear! maybe he wouldn't be able to neither; he's got to go up to that tiresome Mrs. Robn's; it's too bad. Well, take good care of yourself, darling; couldn't you stop till it's cooler!—well, come and see me as soon as you can again, but don't come without someone else along! Good-bye! I wish I could keep you."

She went to the door to see her mount, and smiled and nodded her *off*.

Ellen was greatly refreshed with her rest and her dinner; it grieved her that the Brownie had not fared as well. Ellen's heart felt easier, now that her business was done; and when she had left the town behind her and was again in the fields, she was less timid than she had been before; she was going towards home; that makes a great difference; and every step was bringing her nearer. "I am glad I came after all," she thought; "but I hope I shall never have to do such a thing again. But I am glad I came."

She had no more than crossed the little bridge, however, when she saw what brought her heart into her mouth. It was Mr. Saunders, lolling under a tree. What could he have come there for at that time of day? A vague feeling crossed her mind that if she could only get past him she should pass a danger; she thought to ride by without seeming to see him, and quietly gave the Brownie a pat to make him go faster. But as she drew near Mr. Saunders rose up, came to the middle of the road, and taking hold of her bridle, checked her pony's pace so that he could walk alongside; to Ellen's unspeakable dismay.

"What's kept you so long?" said he; "I've been looking out for you this great while. Had hard work to find the doctor?"

"Won't you please to let go of my horse," said Ellen, her heart beating very fast; "I am in a great hurry to get home; please don't keep me."

"Oh, I want to see you a little," said Mr. Saunders; "you ain't in such a hurry to get away from me as that comes to, are you?"

Ellen was silent.

"It's quite a long time since I saw you last," said he; "how have the merinoes worn?"

Ellen could not bear to look at his face, and did not see the expression which went with these words, yet she felt it.

"They have worn very well," said she, "but I want to get home very much—*please* let me go."

"Not yet—not yet," said he—"oh, no, not yet. I want to talk to you; why, what are you in such a devil of a hurry for? I came out on purpose; do you think I am going to have all my long waiting for nothing?"

Ellen did not know what to say; her heart sprang with a nameless pang to the thought, if she ever got free from this! Meanwhile, she was not free.

"Whose horse is that you're on?"

"Mine," said Ellen.

"Your'n! that's a likely story. I guess he ain't your'n, and so you won't mind if I touch him up a little; I want to see how well you can sit on a horse."

Passing his arm through the bridle as he said these words, Mr. Saunders led the pony down to the side of the road where grew a clump of high bushes; and with some trouble cut off a long, stout sapling. Ellen looked in every direction while he was doing this, despairing, as she looked, of aid from any quarter of the broad, quiet, open country. Oh, for wings! But she could not leave the Brownie if she had them.

Returning to the middle of the road, Mr. Saunders amused himself as they walked along with stripping off all the leaves and little twigs from his sapling, leaving it when done a very good imitation of an ox-whip in size and length, with a fine lash-like point. Ellen watched him in an ecstasy of apprehension, afraid alike to speak or to be silent.

"There! what do you think of that?" said he, giving it two or three switches in the air to try its suppleness and toughness; "don't that look like a whip? Now we'll see how he'll go!"

"Please don't do anything with it," said Ellen, earnestly. "I never touch him with a whip—he doesn't need it—he isn't used to it; pray, pray, do not!"

"Oh, we'll just tickle him a little with it," said Mr. Saunders, coolly; "I want to see how well you'll sit him: just make him caper a little bit."

He accordingly applied the switch lightly to the Brownie's heels,

enough to annoy without hurting him. The Brownie showed signs of uneasiness, quitted his quiet pace, and took to little starts and springs and whiskey motions, most displeasing to the rider.

"Oh, do not!" cried Ellen, almost beside herself, "he's very spirited, and I don't know what he will do if you trouble him."

"You let me take care of that," said Mr. Saunders; "if he troubles me I'll give it to him! If he rears up, only you catch hold of his mane and hold on tight, and you won't fall off; I want to see him rear."

"But you'll give him bad tricks!" said Ellen. "Oh, pray, don't do so! It's very bad for him to be teased. I am afraid he will kick if you do so, and he'd be ruined if he got a habit of kicking. Oh, please let us go!" said she, with the most acute accent of entreaty—"I want to be home."

"You keep quiet," said Mr. Saunders, coolly; "if he kicks, I'll give him such a lathering as he never had yet; he won't do it but once. I ain't agoing to hurt him, but I am agoing to make him rear; no, I won't—I'll make him leap over a rail, the first bar-place we come to; that'll be prettier."

"Oh, you mustn't do that," said Ellen; "I have not learned to leap yet; I couldn't keep on; you mustn't do that, if you please."

"You just hold fast, and hold your tongue. Catch hold of his ears, and you'll stick on fast enough; if you can't, you may get down, for I am going to make him take the leap whether you will or no." Ellen feared still more to get off and leave the Brownie to her tormentor's mercy than to stay where she was and take her chance. She tried in vain, as well as she could, to soothe her horse; the touches of the whip coming now in one place and now in another, and some of them pretty sharp, he began to grow very frisky indeed; and she began to be very much frightened for fear she should suddenly be jerked off. With a good deal of presence of mind, though wrought up to a terrible pitch of excitement and fear, Ellen gave her best attention to keeping her seat as the Brownie sprang and started and jumped to one side and the other; Mr. Saunders holding the bridle as loose as possible so as to give him plenty of room. For some little time he amused himself with this game, the horse growing more and more irritated. At length a smart stroke of the whip upon his haunches made the Brownie spring in a way that brought Ellen's heart into her mouth, and almost threw her off.

"Oh, don't!" cried Ellen, bursting into tears for the first time; she

had with great effort commanded them back until now. "Poor Brownie! How can you! Oh, please let us go!—please, let us go!"

For one minute she dropped her face in her hands.

"Be quiet!" said Mr. Saunders. "Here's a bar-place—now for the leap!"

Ellen wiped away her tears, forced back those that were coming, and began the most earnest remonstrance and pleading with Mr. Saunders that she knew how to make. He paid her no sort of attention. He led the Brownie to the side of the road, let down all the bars but the lower two, let go the bridle, and stood a little off prepared with his whip to force the horse to take the spring.

"I tell you, I shall fall," said Ellen, reining him back. "How can you be so cruel! I want to go home!"

"Well, you ain't agoin' home yet. Get off, if you are afraid," said Mr. Saunders.

But though trembling in every nerve from head to foot, Ellen fancied the Brownie was safer so long as he had her on his back; she would not leave him. She pleaded her best, which Mr. Saunders heard as if it was amusing, and without making any answer kept the horse capering in front of the bars, pretending every minute he was going to whip him up to take the leap. His object, however, was merely to gratify the smallest of minds by teasing a child he had a spite against; he had no intention to risk breaking her bones by a fall from her horse; so in time he had enough of the bar-place; took the bridle again and walked on. Ellen drew breath a little more freely.

"Did you hear how I handled your old gentleman after that time?" said Mr. Saunders.

Ellen made no answer.

"No one ever affronts me that don't hear news of it afterwards, and so he found to his cost. I paid him off, to my heart's content. I gave the old fellow a lesson to behave in future. I forgive him now entirely. By the way, I've a little account to settle with you. Didn't you ask Mr. Perriman this morning if Dr. Gibson was in the house?"

"I don't know who it was," said Ellen.

"Well, hadn't I told you just before he warn't there?"

Ellen was silent.

"What did you do that for, eh? Didn't you believe me?"

Still she did not speak.

"I say!" said Mr. Saunders, touching the Brownie as he spoke, "did you think I told you a lie about it—eh?"

"I didn't know but he might be there," Ellen forced herself to say.

"Then you didn't believe me?" said he, always with that same smile upon his face; Ellen knew that.

"Now, that wasn't handsome of you; and I'm a-going to punish you for it, somehow or 'nother; but it ain't pretty to quarrel with ladies, so Brownie and me'll settle it together. You won't mind that, I dare say."

"What are you going to do?" said Ellen, as he once more drew her down to the side of the fence.

"Get off, and you'll see," said he laughing. "Get off, and you'll see."

"What do you want to do?" repeated Ellen, though scarce able to speak the words.

"I'm just going to tickle Brownie a little, to teach you to believe honest folks when they speak the truth. Get off!"

"No, I won't," said Ellen, throwing both arms round the neck of her pony. "Poor Brownie! You shan't do it. He hasn't done you any harm, nor I either. You are a bad man!"

"Get off!" repeated Mr. Saunders.

"I will not!" said Ellen, still clinging fast.

"Very well," said he, coolly, "then I'll take you off; it don't make much difference. We'll go along a little farther till I find a nice stone for you to sit down upon. If you had got off then I wouldn't ha' done much to him, but I'll give it to him now! If he hasn't been used to a whip he'll know pretty well what it means by the time I have done with him; and then you may go home as fast as you can."

It is very likely Mr. Saunders would have been as good, or as bad, as his word. His behaviour to Ellen in the store at New York, and the measures taken by the old gentleman who had befriended her, had been the cause of his dismissal from the employ of Messrs. St. Clair and Fleury. Two or three other attempts to get into business had come to nothing, and he had been obliged to return to his native town. Ever since, Ellen and the old man had lived in his memory as objects of the deepest spite;—the one for interfering, ~~the other~~ for having been the innocent cause; and he no sooner saw her in the post-office than he promised himself revenge, such revenge as only the meanest and most cowardly spirit could have taken pleasure in. His best way of distressing Ellen, he found, was through her horse. He had almost satisfied himself; but very naturally his feelings of

spite had grown stronger and blunter with indulgence, and he meant to wind up with such a treatment of her pony, real or seeming, as he knew would give great pain to the pony's mistress. He was prevented.

As they went slowly along, Ellen still clasping the Brownie's neck, and resolved to cling to him to the last, Mr. Saunders making him caper in a way very uncomfortable to her, one was too busy and the other too deafened by fear to notice the sound of fast approaching hoofs behind them. It happened that John Humphreys had passed the night at Ventnor; and having an errand to do for a friend at Thirlwall, had taken that road, which led him but a few miles out of his way, and was now at full speed on his way home. He had never made the Brownie's acquaintance, and did not recognise Ellen as he came up; but in passing them some strange notion crossing his mind, he wheeled his horse round directly in front of the astonished pair.

Ellen quitted her pony's neck, and stretching out both arms towards him, exclaimed, and almost shrieked, "Oh, John! John! send him away! make him let me go!"

"What are you about, sir," said the new-comer sternly.

"It's none of your business!" answered Mr. Saunders, in whom rage for the time overcame cowardice.

"Take your hand off the bridle," with a slight touch of the riding-whip upon the hand in question.

"Not for you, brother," said Mr. Saunders, sneeringly. "I'll walk with any lady I've a mind to. Look out for yourself!"

"We will dispense with your further attendance," said John, coolly. "Do you hear me? Do as I order you!"

The speaker did not put himself in a passion, and Mr. Saunders, accustomed for his own part to make bluster serve instead of prowess, despised a command so calmly given. Ellen, who knew the voice, and, still better, could read the eye, drew conclusions very different. She was almost breathless with terror. Saunders was enraged and mortified at an interference that promised to baffle him; he was a stout young man, and judged himself the stronger of the two, and took notice besides that the stranger had nothing in his hand but a slight riding-whip. He answered very insolently and with an oath; and John saw that he was taking the bridle in his left hand and shifting his sapling whip so as to bring the club end of it uppermost. The next instant he aimed a furious blow at his adversary's horse. The quick eye and hand of the rider disappointed that with

a sudden swerve. In another moment, and Ellen hardly saw how, it was so quick, John had dismounted, taken Mr. Saunders by the collar, and hauled him quite over into the gully at the side of the road, where he lay at full length without stirring. "Ride on, Ellen!" said her deliverer.

She obeyed. He stayed a moment to say to his fallen adversary a few words of pointed warning as to ever repeating his offence; then remounted and spurred forward to join Ellen. All her power of keeping up was gone, now that the necessity was over. Her head was once more bowed on her pony's neck, her whole frame shaking with convulsive sobs; she could scarce with great effort keep from crying out aloud.

"Ehne!" said her adopted brother, in a voice that could hardly be known for the one that had last spoken. She had no words, but as he gently took one of her hands, the convulsive squeeze it gave him showed the state of nervous excitement she was in. It was very long before his utmost efforts could soothe her, or she could command herself enough to tell him her story. When at last told, it was with many tears.

"Oh, how could he! how could he!" said poor Ellen; "how could he do so—it was very hard!"

An involuntary touch of the spurs made John's horse start.

"But what took you to Thirlwall alone?" said he; "you have not told me that yet."

Ellen went back to Timothy's invasion of the cabbages, and gave him the whole history of the morning.

"I thought when I was going for the doctor at first," said she, "and then afterwards when I had found him, what a good thing it was that Timothy broke down the garden fence and got in this morning; for if it had not been for that I should not have gone to Mr. Van Brunt's; and then again after that I thought, if he only hadn't!"

"Little things often draw after them long trains of circumstances," said John, "and that shows the folly of those people who think that God does not stoop to concern Himself about trifles; life, and much more than life, may hang upon the turn of a hand. But, Ellen, you must ride no more alone. Promise me that you will not."

"I will not to Thirlwall, certainly," said Ellen, "but mayn't I to Alice's? how can I help it?"

"Well—to Alice's—that is a safe part of the country; but I should like to know a little more of your horse before trusting you even there."

"Of the Brownie?" said Ellen; "oh, he is as good as he can be."

you need not be afraid of him; he has no trick at all; there never was such a good little horse."

John smiled. "How do you like mine?" said he.

"Is that your new one? Oh, what a beauty!—oh me, what a beauty! I didn't look at him before. Oh, I like him much! he's handsomer than the Brownie; do you like him?"

"Very well! this is the first trial I have made of him. I was at Mr. Marshman's last night, and they detained me this morning or I should have been much earlier. I am very well satisfied with him, so far."

"And if you had *not* been detained!" said Ellen.

"Yes, Ellie, I should not have fretted at my late breakfast, and having to try Mr. Marshman's favourite mare, if I had known what good purpose the delay was to serve. I wish I could have been here half an hour sooner, though."

"Is his name the Black Prince?" said Ellen, returning to the horse.

"Yes, I believe so; but you shall change it, Ellie, if you can find one you like better."

"Oh, I cannot; I like that very much. How beautiful he is. Is he good?"

"I hope so," said John, smiling; "if he is not I shall be at the pains to make him so. We are hardly acquainted yet."

Ellen looked doubtfully at the black horse and his rider, and patting the Brownie's neck, observed with great satisfaction that *he* was very good.

John had been riding very slowly on Ellen's account; they now mended their pace. He saw, however, that she still looked miserable, and exerted himself to turn her thoughts from everything disagreeable. Much to her amusement he rode round her two or three times, to view her horse and show her his own; commended the Brownie; praised her bridal hand; corrected several things about her riding; and by degrees engaged her in a very animated conversation. Ellen roused up, the colour came back to her cheeks; and when they reached home and rode round to the glass door she looked almost like herself.

She sprang off as usual without waiting for any help. John scarce saw that she had done so, when Alice's cry of joy brought him to the door, and from that together they went into their father's study. Ellen was left alone on the lawn. Something was the matter; for

she stood with swimming eyes and a trembling lip, rubbing her stirrup which really needed no polishing, and forgetting the tired horses, which would have had her sympathy at any other time. 'What *was* the matter? Only—that Mr. John had forgotten the kiss he always gave her on going or coming. Ellen was jealous of it as a pledge of sistership; and though she tried as hard as she could to get her face in order, so that she might go in and meet them, somehow it seemed to take a great while. She was still busy with her stirrup when she suddenly felt two hands on her shoulders, and looking up received the very kiss the want of which she had been lamenting. But John saw the tears in her eyes, and asked her, she thought with somewhat of a comical look, what the matter was? Ellen was ashamed to tell, but he had her there by the shoulders, and besides, whatever that eye demanded she never knew how to keep back, so with some difficulty she told him.

"You are a foolish child, Elsie," said he, gently, and kissing her again. "Run in out of the sun while I see to the horses."

Ellen ran in, and told her long story to Alice; and then feeling very weary and weak she sat on the sofa and lay resting in her arms in a state of the most entire and unruffled happiness. Alice, however, after a while transferred her to bed, thinking with good reason that a long sleep would be the best thing for her.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HALCYON DAYS.

WHEN Ellen came out of Alice's room again it was late in the afternoon. The sun was so low that the shadow of the house had crossed the narrow lawn and mounted up near to the top of the trees; but on them he was still shining brightly, and on the broad landscape beyond, which lay open to view through the gap in the trees. The glass door was open; the sweet summer air and the sound of birds and insects, and fluttering leaves floated into the room, making the stillness musical. On the threshold pussy sat crouched, with his fore-feet doubled under his breast, watching with intense gravity the operations of Margery, who was setting the table on the lawn just before his eyes. Alice was paring peaches.

"How nice those peaches look; they are as good as strawberries."

don't you think so? better, I don't know which is the best ; but Mr. John likes these best, don't he? Now you've done ; shall I set them on the table? and here's a pitcher of splendid cream, Alice."

"You had better not tell John so, or he will make you define *splendid*."

John, who had gone to see how Mr. Van Brunt was getting on, and also to explain Ellen's absence to Aunt Fortune, came back in good time, and brought word that Mr. Van Brunt was doing very well, so far as could be known ; also, that Miss Fortune consented to Ellen's remaining where she was. He wisely did not say, however, that her consent had been slow to gain till he had hinted at his readiness to provide a substitute for Ellen's services ; on which Miss Fortune had instantly declared that she did not want her and she might stay as long as she pleased. This was all that was needed to complete Ellen's felicity.

"Wasn't your poor horse too tired to go out again this afternoon, Mr. John?"

"I did not ride him, Ellie ; I took yours."

"The Brownie ! did you? I'm very glad ! How did you like him? But perhaps he was tired a little, and you couldn't tell so well to-day."

"He was not tired with any work you had given him, Ellie ; perhaps he may be a little now."

"Why?" said Ellen, somewhat alarmed.

"I have been trying him ; and instead of going along the road we have been taking some of the fences in our way. As I intend practising you at the bar, I wished to make sure in the first place that he knew his lesson."

"Well, how did he do?"

"Perfectly well ; I believe he is a good little fellow. I wanted to satisfy myself if he was fit to be trusted with you, and I rather think Mr. Marshman has taken care of that."

The whole wall of trees was in shadow when the little family sat down to table ; but there was still the sunlit picture behind ; and there was another kind of sunshine in every face at the table. Quietly happy the whole four, or at least the whole three, were, first, in being together, after that, in all things besides. Never was tea so refreshing, or bread and butter so sweet, or the song of birds so delightful.

When tea was over, and Margery had withdrawn the things and taken away the table, they still lingered in their places.

It was far too pleasant to go in. Mr. Humphreys moved his chair to the side of the house, and throwing a handkerchief over his head to defend him from the mosquitoes, a few of which were buzzing about, he either listened, meditated, or slept; most probably one or the two latter; for the conversation was not very loud nor very lively; it was happiness enough merely to breathe so near each other.

"Sometimes, John," said Alice, after a long pause, "I am afraid I have one tie too strong to this world. I cannot bear, as I ought, to have you away from me."

Her brother's lips were instantly pressed to her forehead.

"I may say to you, Alice, as Colonel Gardener said to his wife, 'we have an eternity to spend together!'"

"I wonder," said Alice, after a pause, "how those can bear to love and be loved, whose affection can see nothing but a blank beyond the grave."

"Few people, I believe," said her brother, "would come exactly under that description; most flatter themselves with a vague hope of reunion after death."

"But that is a miserable hope very different from ours."

"Very different indeed! and miserable, for it can only deceive; but ours is sure. 'Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.'"

"Precious!" said Alice. "How exactly fitted to every want and mood of the mind are the sweet Bible words."

"Well!" said Mr. Humphreys, rousing himself, "I am going in! These mosquitoes have half eaten me up. Are you going to sit there all night?"

"We are thinking of it, papa," said Alice, cheerfully.

He went in, and was heard calling Margery for a light.

They had better lights on the lawn. The stars began to peep out through the soft blue, and as the blue grew deeper they came out more and brighter, till all heaven was hung with lamps. But that was not all. In the eastern horizon, just above the low hills that bordered the far side of the plain, a white light, spreading and growing and brightening, promised the moon, and promised that she would rise very splendid; and even before she came began to throw a faint lustre over the landscape. All eyes were fastened, and exclamations burst, as the first silver edge showed itself, and the moon rapidly rising looked on them with her whole broad bright face; lighting up not only their faces and figures but the wide country view that was spread out below, and touching most beautifully the trees in the edge of the

gap, and faintly the lawn; while the wall of wood stood in deeper and blacker shadow than ever.

"Isn't that beautiful!" said Ellen.

"Come round here, Ellie," said John. "Alice may have you all the rest of the year, but when I am at home you belong to me. What was your little head busied upon a while ago?"

• "When?" said Ellen.

"When I asked you——"

"Oh, I know,—I remember. I was thinking——"

"Well?——"

"I was thinking do you want me to tell you?"

"Unless you would rather not."

"I was thinking about Jesus Christ," said Ellen in a low tone.

"What about Him, dear Ellie?" said her brother, drawing her closer to his side.

"Different things,—I was thinking of what He said about little children—and about what He said, you know, 'In my Father's house are many mansions'; and I was thinking that mamma was there; and I thought—that we all——"

Ellen could get no farther.

"He that believeth in Him shall not be ashamed," said John softly. "'This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life; and who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Not death, nor things present, nor things to come. But he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure'; let us remember that too."

For a little while each was busy with his own meditations. The moon meanwhile, rising higher and higher, poured a flood of light through the gap in the woods before them, and stealing among the trees here and there lit up a spot of ground under their deep shadow. The distant picture lay in mazy brightness. All was still, but the ceaseless chirrup of insects and gentle flapping of leaves; the summer air just touched their cheeks with the lightest breath of a kiss, sweet from distant hay-fields, and nearer pines and hemlocks, and other of nature's numberless perfume-boxes. The hay-harvest had been remarkably late this year.

"What is the reason the moon looks so much larger when she first gets up than she does afterwards?" Ellen asked presently.

"Whom are you asking?"

"You."

"And who is you? Here are two people in the moonlight."

"Mr. John Humphreys, Alice's brother, and that Thomas calls 'the young master,'" said Ellen, laughing.

"You are more shy of taking a leap than your little horse is," said John, smiling, "but I shall bring you up to it yet. What is the cause of the sudden enlargement of my thumb?"

He had drawn a small magnifying glass from his pocket, and held it between his hand and Ellen.

"Why, it is not enlarged," said Ellen, "it is only magnified."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, the glass makes it look larger."

"Do you know how, or why?"

"No."

He put up the glass again.

"But what do you mean by that?" said Ellen, "there is no magnifying glass between us and the moon to make *her* look larger."

"You are sure of that?"

"Why, yes!" said Ellen; "I am perfectly sure; there is nothing in the world. There she is, right up there, looking straight down upon us, and there is nothing between."

"What is it that keeps up that pleasant fluttering of leaves in the wood?"

"Why, the wind."

"And what is the wind?"

"It is air—air moving, I suppose."

"Exactly. Then there *is* something between us and the moon?"

"The air? But, Mr. John, one can see quite clearly through the air; it doesn't make things look larger or smaller."

"How far do you suppose the air reaches from us towards the moon?"

"Why all the way, don't it?"

"No—only about forty miles. If it reached all the way there would indeed be no magnifying-glass in the case."

"But how is it?" said Ellen. "I don't understand."

"I cannot tell you to-night, Ellie. There is a long ladder of knowledge to go up before we can get to the moon, but we will begin to mount to-morrow, if nothing happens. Alice, you have that little book of Conversations on Natural Philosophy, which you and I used to delight ourselves with in old time?"

"Safe and sound in the book-case," said Alice. "I have thought of giving it to Ellen before, but she has been busy enough with what she had already."

"I have done Rollin now, though," said Ellen; "that is lucky. I am ready for the moon."

This new study was begun the next day, and Ellen took great delight in it. She would have run on too fast in her eagerness but for the steady hand of her teacher; he obliged her to be very thorough. This was only one of her items of business. The weeks of John's stay were as usual not merely weeks of constant and varied delight, but of constant and swift improvement too.

A good deal of time was given to the riding-lessons. John busied himself one morning in preparing a bar for her on the lawn; so placed that it might fall if the horse's heels touched it. Here Ellen learned to take first standing, and then running, leaps. She was afraid at first, but habit wore that off; and the bar was raised higher and higher, till Margery declared she "couldn't stand and look at her going over it."

Drawing, too, went on finely. He began to let her draw things from nature; and many a pleasant morning the three went out together with pencils, and books, and work, and spent hours in the open air. They would find a pretty point of view, or a nice shady place where the breeze came, and where there was some good old rock with a tree beside it, or a piece of fence, or the house or barn in the distance, for Ellen to sketch; and while she drew and Alice worked, John read aloud to them. At home there were other studies and much reading; many tea-drinkings on the lawn, and even breakfastings, which she thought pleasanter still.

As soon as it was decided that Mr. Van Brunt's leg was doing well, and in a fair way to be sound again, Ellen went to see him; and after that rarely let two days pass without going again. John and Alice used to ride with her so far, and taking a turn beyond while she made her visit, call for her on their way back. She had a strong motive for going in the pleasure her presence always gave, both to Mr. Van Brunt and his mother. Sam Larkens had been to Thirlwall and seen Mrs. Forbes, and from him they had heard the story of her fitting up and down the town in search of the doctor; neither of them could forget it. Mrs. Van Brunt poured out her affection in all sorts of expressions whenever she had Ellen's ear; her son was not a man of

many words; but Ellen knew his face and manner well enough without them, and read there whenever she went into his room what gave her great pleasure.

"How do you do, Mr. Van Brunt?" she said on one of these occasions.

"Oh, I'm getting along, I s'pose," said he; "getting along as well as a man can that's lying on his back from morning to night; prostrated, as Squire Dennison said his corn was t'other day."

"It is very tiresome, isn't it?" said Ellen.

"It's the tiresomest work that ever was, for a man that has two arms to be a doing nothing, day after day. And what bothers me is the wheat in that ten acre plot, that *ought* to be prostrated too, and ain't, nor ain't like to be as I know, unless the rain comes and does it. Sam and Johnny'll make no headway at all with it—I can tell as well as if I see 'em."

"But Sam is good, isn't he?" said Ellen.

"Sam's as good a boy as ever was; but then Johnny Low is mischievous, you see, and he gets Sam out of his tracks once in a while. I never see a finer growth of wheat. I had a sight rather cut and harvest the hull of it than to lie here and think of it getting spoiled. I'm a'most out o' conceit o' trap-doors, Ellen."

Ellen could not help smiling.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"There ain't nothing," said he; "I wish there was. How are you coming along at home?"

"I don't know," said Ellen; "I am not there just now, you know; I am staying up with Miss Alice again."

"Oh, ay! while her brother's at home. He's a splendid man, that young Mr. Humphreys, ain't he?"

"Oh, I knew that a great while ago," said Ellen, the bright colour of pleasure overspreading her face.

"Well, I didn't, you see, till the other day, when he came here, very kindly, to see how I was getting on. I wish something would bring him again. I never heard a man talk I liked to hear so much."

Ellen secretly resolved something *should* bring him; and went on with a purpose she had had for some time in her mind.

"Wouldn't it be pleasant, while you are lying there and can do nothing,—wouldn't you like to have me read something to you, Mr. Van Brunt? I should like to, very much."

"It's just like you," said he, gratefully, "to think of that; but I wouldn't have you be bothered with it."

"It wouldn't indeed. I should like it very much."

"Well, if you've a mind," said he; "I can't say but it would be a kind o' comfort to keep that grain out o' my head a while. Seems to me I have cut and housed it all three times over already. Read just whatever you have a mind to. If you was to go over a last year's almanac it would be as good as a fiddle to me."

"I'll do better for you than that, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen, laughing in high glee at having gained her point. She had secretly brought her "*Pilgrim's Progress*" with her, and now with marvellous satisfaction drew it forth.

With a throbbing heart, Ellen began; and read, notes and all, till the sound of tramping hoofs and Alice's voice make her break off. It encouraged and delighted her to see that Mr. Van Brunt's attention was perfectly fixed. He lay still, without moving his eyes from her face, till she stopped; then thanking her, he declared that was a "first-rate book," and he "should like mainly to hear the hull on it."

From that time Ellen was diligent in her attendance on him. That she might have more time for reading than the old plan gave her, she set off by herself alone some time before the others, of course riding home with them. It cost her a little sometimes to forego so much of their company; but she never saw the look of grateful pleasure with which she was welcomed without ceasing to regret her self-denial. After a while she ventured to ask if she might read him a chapter in the Bible. He agreed very readily; owning "he hadn't ought to be so long without reading one as he had been." Ellen then made it a rule to herself, without asking any more questions, to end every reading with a chapter in the Bible; and she carefully sought out those that might be most likely to take hold of his judgment or feelings. They took hold of her own very deeply, by the means; what was strong, or tender, before, now seemed to her too mighty to be withstood; and Ellen read not only with her lips, but with her whole heart: the precious words, longing that they might come with their just effect upon Mr. Van Brunt's mind.

Once as she finished reading the tenth chapter of John, a favourite chapter, which between her own feeling of it and her strong wish for him had moved her even to tears, she cast a glance at his face to see how he took it. His head was a little turned to one side, and his eyes

closed; she thought he was asleep. Ellen was very much disappointed. She sank her head upon her book and prayed that a time might come when he would know the worth of those words. The touch of his hand startled her.

"What is the matter?" said he. "Are you tired?"

"No," said Ellen, looking hastily up; "oh, no! I'm not tired."

"But what ails you?" said the astonished Mr. Van Brunt; "what have you been crying for? what's the matter?"

"Oh, never mind," said Ellen, brushing her hand over her eyes, "it's no matter."

"Yes, but I want to know," said Mr. Van Brunt; "you shan't have anything to vex you that I can help; what is it?"

"It is nothing, Mr. Van Brunt," said Ellen, bursting into tears again, "only I thought you were asleep; I—I thought you didn't care enough about the Bible to keep awake; I want so much that you should be a Christian!"

He half groaned and turned his head away.

"What makes you wish that so much?" said he, after a minute or two.

"Because I want you to be happy," said Ellen, "and I know you can't without."

"Well, I am pretty tolerable happy," said he; "as happy as most folks, I guess."

"But I want you to be happy when you die, too," said Ellen; "I want to meet you in heaven."

"I hope I will go there, surely," said he, gravely, "when the time comes."

Ellen was uneasily silent, not knowing what to say.

"I ain't as good as I ought to be," said he, presently, with a half-sigh; "I ain't good enough to go to heaven; I wish I was. *You* are, I do believe."

"I! Oh, no, Mr. Van Brunt, do not say that; I am not good at all; I am full of wrong things."

"Well, I wish I was as full of wrong things too, in the same way," said he.

"But I am," said Ellen, "whether you will believe it or not. Nobody is good, Mr. Van Brunt. But Jesus Christ has died for us, and if we ask Him He will forgive us, and wash away our sins, and teach us to love Him, and make us good, and take us to be with Him in heaven. Oh, I wish you would ask Him!" she repeated, with an earnestness

that went to his heart. "I don't believe anyone can be very happy that doesn't love Him."

"Is that what makes *you* happy?" said he.

"I have a great many things to make me happy," said Ellen, soberly, "but that is the greatest of all. It always makes me happy to think of Him, and it makes everything else a thousand times pleasanter. I wish you knew how it is, Mr. Van Brunt."

He was silent for a little, and disturbed, Ellen thought.

"Well!" said he at length, "tain't the folks that think themselves the best that is the best always; if you ain't good I should like to know what goodness is. *There's* somebody that thinks you be," said he, a minute or two afterwards, as the horses were heard coming to the gate.

"No, she knows me better than that," said Ellen.

"It isn't any *she* that I mean," said Mr. Van Brunt. "There's somebody else out there, ain't there?"

"Who?" said Ellen, "Mr. John? Oh, no, indeed he don't. It was only this morning he was telling me of something I did that was wrong." Her eyes watered as she spoke.

"We must have mighty sharp eyes, then," said Mr. Van Brunt, "for it beats all *my* powers of seeing things."

"And so he has," said Ellen, putting on her bonnet, "he always knows what I am thinking of just as well as if I told him. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye," said he; "I ha'n't forgotten what you've been saying, and I don't mean to."

How full of sweet pleasure was the ride home!

CHAPTER XL.

"PRODIGIOUS!"

IN due time Mr. Van Brunt was on his legs again, much to everybody's joy, and much to the advantage of fields, fences, and grain. Sam and Johnny found they must "spring to," as their leader said; and Miss Fortune declared she was thankful she could draw a long breath again, for do what she would she couldn't be everywhere. Before this John and the Black Prince had departed, and Alice and Ellen were left alone again.

"How long will it be, dear Alice," said Ellen, as they stood sorrow-

fully looking down the road by which he had gone, "before he will be through that—before he will be able to leave Doncaster?"

"Next summer."

"And what will he do then?"

"Then he will be ordained."

"Ordained?—what is that?"

"He will be solemnly set apart for the work of the ministry, and appointed to it by a number of clergymen."

"And then will he come and stay at home, Alice?"

"I don't know what then, dear Ellen," said Alice, sighing; "he may for a little; but papa wishes very much that before he is settled anywhere he should visit England and Scotland and see our friends there. Though I hardly think John will do it unless he sees some further reason for going. If he do not, he will probably soon be called somewhere—Mr. Marshman wants him to come to Randolph. I don't know how it will be."

"Well!" said Ellen, with a kind of acquiescing sigh, "at any rate now we must wait until next Christmas."

The winter passed away with little to mark it except the usual visits to Ventnor; which, however, by common consent, Alice and Ellen had agreed should *not* be when John was at home. At all other times they were much prized and enjoyed. Every two or three months Mr. Marshman was sure to come for them, or Mr. Howard, or perhaps the carriage only with a letter; and it was bargained that Mr. Humphreys should follow to see them home. It was not always that Ellen could go, but the disappointments were seldom; she too had become quite domesticated at Ventnor, and was sincerely loved by the whole family. Many as were the times she had been there, it had oddly happened that she had never met her old friend of the boat again; but she was very much attached to old Mr. and Mrs. Marshman, and Mrs. Chauncey and her daughter; the latter of whom reckoned all the rest of her young friends as nothing compared with Ellen Montgomery. Ellen, in her opinion, did everything better than anyone else of her age.

"She has good teachers," said Mrs. Chauncey.

"Yes, indeed! I should think she had. Alice—I should think anybody would learn well with her; and Mr. John—I suppose he's as good, though I don't know so much about him; but he must be a great deal better teacher than Mr. Sandford, mamma, for Ellen draws *ten times* as well as I do!"

"Perhaps that is your fault and not Mr. Sandford's," said her mother, "though I rather think you overrate the difference."

"I am sure I take pains enough, if that's all," said the little girl; "what more can I do, mamma? But Ellen is so pleasant about it always; she never seems to think she does better than I; and she is always ready to help me and take ever so much time to show me how to do things; she is so pleasant; isn't she, mamma? I know I have heard you say she is very polite."

"She is certainly that," said Mrs. Gillespie, "and there is a grace in her politeness that can only proceed from great natural delicacy and refinement of character; how she can have such manners, living and working in the way you say she does, I confess is beyond my comprehension."

"One would not readily forget the notion of good-breeding in the society of Alice and John Humphreys," said Miss Sophia.

"And Mr. Humphreys," said Mrs. Chauncey.

"There is no society about him," said Miss Sophia; "he don't say two dozen words a day."

"But she is not with them," said Mrs. Gillespie.

"She is with them a great deal, Aunt Matilda," said Ellen Chauncey, "and they teach her everything, and she does learn! She must be very clever; don't you think she is, mamma? Mamma, she beats me entirely in speaking French, and she knows all about English history; and arithmetic!—and did you ever hear her sing, mamma?"

"I do not believe she beats you, as you call it, in generous estimation of others," said Mrs. Chauncey, smiling, and bending forward to kiss her daughter; "but what is the reason Ellen is so much better read in history than you?"

"I don't know, mamma, unless—I wish I wasn't so fond of reading stories."

"Ellen Montgomery is just as fond of them, I'll warrant," said Miss Sophia.

"Yes. Oh, I know she is fond of them; but then Alice and Mr. John don't let her read them, except now and then one."

"I fancy she does it though when their backs are turned," said Mrs. Gillespie.

"She! Oh, Aunt Matilda! she wouldn't do the least thing they don't like for the whole world. I know she never reads a story when she is here, unless it is my Sunday books, without asking Alice first."

"She is a most extraordinary child!" said Mrs. Gillespie.

"She is a *good* child!" said Mrs. Chauncey.

"Yes, mamma, and that is what I wanted to say; I do not think Ellen is so *polite* because she is much with Alice and John, but *because* she is so sweet and good. I don't think she could *help* being polite."

"It is not that," said Mrs. Gillespie; "mere sweetness and goodness would never give so much elegance of manner. As far as I have seen, Ellen Montgomery is a *perfectly* well-behaved child."

"That she is," said Mrs. Chauncey; "but neither would any cultivation or example be sufficient for it without Ellen's thorough good principle and great sweetness of temper."

"That's exactly what I think, mamma," said Ellen Chauncey.

Ellen's sweetness of temper was not entirely born with her; it was one of the blessed fruits of religion and discipline. Discipline had not done with it yet. When the winter came on, and the house-work grew less, and with renewed vigour she was bending herself to improvement in all sorts of ways, it unluckily came into Miss Fortune's head that some of Ellen's spare time might be turned to account in a new line. With this lady, to propose and to do were two things always very near together. The very next day Ellen was summoned to help her downstairs with the big spinning-wheel. Most unsuspectingly and with her accustomed pleasantness, Ellen did it. But when she was sent up again for the rolls of wool, and Miss Fortune after setting up the wheel, put one of them into her hand and instructed her how to draw out and twist the thread of yarn, she saw all that was coming. She saw it with dismay. So much yarn as Miss Fortune might think it well she should spin, so much time must be taken daily from her beloved reading and writing, drawing and studying; her very heart sank within her. She made no remonstrance, unless her disconsolate face might be thought one; she stood half a day at the big spinning-wheel, fretting secretly, while Miss Fortune went round with an inward chuckle visible in her countenance, that in spite of herself increased Ellen's vexation. And this was not the annoyance of a day; she must expect it day after day through the whole winter. It was a grievous trial. The time Ellen *did* secure to herself was held the more precious and used the more carefully. After all it was a very profitable and pleasant winter to her.

John's visit came as usual at the holidays, and was enjoyed as usual; only that everyone seemed to Ellen more pleasant than

last. The sole other event that broke the quiet course of things (Beside the journeys to Ventnor) was the death of Mrs. Van Brunt. This happened very unexpectedly and after a short illness, not far from the end of January. Ellen was very sorry; both for her own sake and Mr. Van Brunt's, who she was sure felt much, though according to his general custom he said nothing. Ellen felt for him none the less. She little thought what an important bearing this event would have upon her own future well-being.

The winter passed and the spring came. One fine mild pleasant afternoon early in May, Mr. Van Brunt came into the kitchen and asked Ellen if she wanted to go with him and see the sheep salted. Ellen was seated at the table with a large tin pan in her lap, and before her a huge heap of white beans which she was picking over for the Saturday's favourite dish of pork and beans. She looked up at him with a hopeless face.

"I should like to go very much indeed, Mr. Van Brunt, but you see I can't. All these to do!"

"Beans, eh?" said he, putting one or two in his mouth. "Where's your aunt?"

Ellen pointed to the buttery. He immediately went to the door and rapped on it with his knuckles.

"Here, ma'am!" said he, "can't you let this child go with me? I want her along to help feed the sheep."

To Ellen's astonishment her aunt called to her through the closed door to "go along and leave the beans till she came back." Joyfully Ellen obeyed. She turned her back upon the beans, careless of the big heap which would still be there to pick over when she returned; and ran to get her bonnet. In all the time she had been at Thirlwall something had always prevented her seeing the sheep fed with salt, and she went eagerly out of the door with Mr. Van Brunt to a new pleasure.

In great glee Ellen danced along, luckily needing no entertainment from Mr. Van Brunt, who was devoted to his salt-pan. His natural taciturnity seemed greater than ever; he amused himself all the way over the meadow with turning over his salt and tasting it, till Ellen laughingly told him she believed he was as fond of it as the sheep were; and then he took to chucking little bits of it right and left, at anything he saw that was big enough to serve for a mark. Ellen stopped him again by laughing at his wastefulness; and so they came to the wood. She left him then to do as he liked, while she ran

hither and thither to search for flowers. It was slow getting through the wood. He was fain to stop and wait for her.

"Now, I won't keep you any longer," Mr. Van Brunt," said she, when her hands were as full as they could hold; "I have kept you a great while; you are very good to wait for me."

They took up their line of march again, and after crossing the last piece of rocky woodland came to an open hillside, sloping gently up, at the foot of which were several large flat stones.

"But where are the sheep, Mr. Van Brunt?" said Ellen.

"I guess they ain't fur," said he, "You keep quiet, 'cause they don't know you; and they are mighty scary. Just stand still there by the fence. Ca-nan! Ca-nan! Ca-nan, nan, nan, nan, nan, nan!"

This was the sheep call, and raising his voice Mr. Van Brunt made it sound abroad far over the hills. Again and again it sounded; and then Ellen saw the white nose of a sheep at the edge of the woods on the top of the hill. On the call's sounding again the sheep set forward, and in a long train they came running along a narrow footpath down towards where Mr. Van Brunt was standing with his pan. The soft tramp of a multitude of light hoofs in another direction turned Ellen's eyes that way, and there were two more single files of sheep running down the hill from different points in the woodland. The pretty things came scampering along, seeming in a great hurry, till they got very near; then the whole multitude came to a sudden halt, and looked very wistfully and doubtfully indeed at Mr. Van Brunt and the strange little figure standing so still by the fence. They hesitated in great doubt, every sheep of them, whether Mr. Van Brunt were not a traitor, who had put on a friend's voice and lured them down there with some dark evil intent, which he was going to carry out by means of that same dangerous-looking stranger by the fence. Ellen almost expected to see them turn about and go as fast as they had come. But Mr. Van Brunt gently repeating his call, went quietly up to the nearest stone and began to scatter the salt upon it, full in their view. Doubt was at an end; he had hung out the white flag; they flocked down to the stones, no longer at all in fear of double-dealing, and crowded to get at the salt; the rocks where it was strewn were covered with more sheep than Ellen would have thought it possible could stand upon them. They were like pieces of floating ice heaped up with snow, or queen-cakes with an immoderately thick frosting. It was one scene of pushing and crowding; those which had not had their

share of the feast forcing themselves up to get at it, and shoving others off in consequence. Ellen was wonderfully pleased. It was a new and pretty sight, the busy hustling crowd of gentle creatures ; with the soft noise of their tread upon grass and stones, and the eager devouring of the salt. She was fixed with pleasure, looking and listening ; and did not move till the entertainment was over, and the body of the flock were carelessly scattering here and there, while a few that had perhaps been disappointed of their part still lingered upon the stones in the vain hope of yet licking a little saltiness from them.

"Well," said Ellen, "I never knew what salt was worth before. How they do love it ! Is it good for them, Mr. Van Brunt ?"

"Good for them?" said he, "to be sure it is good for them. There ain't a critter that walks, as I know, that it ain't good for,—'cept chickens, and it's very queer it kills them."

They turned to go homeward. Ellen had taken the empty pan to lay her flowers in, thinking it would be better for them than the heat of her hand ; and greatly pleased with what she had come to see, and enjoying her walk as much as it was possible, she was going home very happy ; yet she could not help missing Mr. Van Brunt's old sociableness. He was uncommonly silent, even for him, considering that he and Ellen were alone together ; and she wondered what had possessed him with a desire to cut down all the young saplings he came to that were large enough for walking-sticks. He did not want to make any use of them, that was certain, for as fast as he cut and trimmed out one he threw it away and cut another. Ellen was glad when they got out into the open fields where there were none to be found.

"It is just about this time a year ago," said she, "that Aunt Fortune was getting well of her long fit of sickness."

"Yes?" said Mr. Van Brunt, with a very profound air ; "something is always happening most years."

Ellen did not know what to make of this philosophical remark.

"I am very glad nothing is happening this year," said she ; "I think it is a great deal pleasanter to have things go on quietly."

"Oh, something might happen without hindering things going on quietly, I s'pose,—mightn't it?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, wonderingly ; "why, Mr. Van Brunt, what is going to happen?"

"I declare," said he, half laughing, "you're as cute as a razor ; I didn't say there was anything going to happen, did I?"

"But is there?" said Ellen.

"Hain't your aunt said nothing to you about it?"

"Why, no," said Ellen, "she never tells me anything; what is it?"

"Why, the story is," said Mr. Van Brunt, "at least I know, for I've understood, so much from herself, that—I believe she's going to be married before long."

"She!" exclaimed Ellen. "Married!—Aunt Fortune!"

"I believe so," said Mr. Van Brunt, making a lunge at a tuft of tall grass and pulling off two or three spears of it, which he carried to his mouth.

There was a long silence, during which Ellen saw nothing in earth, air, or sky, and knew no longer whether she was passing through woodland or meadow. To frame words into another sentence was past her power. They came in sight of the barn at length. She would not have much more time.

"Will it be soon, Mr. Van Brunt?"

"Why, pretty soon, as soon as next week, I guess; so I thought it was time you ought to be told. Do you know to who?"

"I don't *know*," said Ellen in a low voice; "I couldn't help guessing."

"I reckon you've guessed about 'right," said he, without looking at her.

There was another silence, during which it seemed to Ellen that her thoughts were tumbling head over heels, they were in such confusion.

"The short and the long of it is," said Mr. Van Brunt, as they rounded the corner of the barn, "we have made up our minds to draw in the same yoke; and we're both on us pretty go ahead folks, so I guess we'll contrive to pull the cart along. I had just as lief tell you, Ellen, that all this was as good as settled a long spell back—'fore you ever come to Thirlwall; but I was never agoing to leave my old mother without a home; so I stuck to her, and would, to the end of time, if I had never been married. But now she is gone, and there is nothing to keep me to the old place any longer. So now you know the hull on it, and I wanted you should."

With this particularly cool statement of his matrimonial views, Mr. Van Brunt turned off into the barnyard, leaving Ellen to go home by herself. She felt as if she were walking on air while she crossed the chip-yard, and the very house had a seeming of unreality. Mechanically she put her flowers in water, and sat down to finish the beans.

but the beans might have been flowers and the flowers beans for all the difference Ellen saw in them. Miss Fortune and she shunned each other's faces most carefully for a long time; Ellen felt it impossible to meet her eyes; and it is a matter of great uncertainty which in fact did first look at the other. Other than this there was no manner of difference in anything without or within the house. Mr. Van Brunt's being absolutely speechless was not a very uncommon thing.

CHAPTER XLI.

"THE CLOUDS RETURN AFTER THE RAIN."

As soon as she could Ellen carried this wonderful news to Alice, and eagerly poured out the whole story, her walk and all. She was somewhat disappointed at the calmness of her hearer.

"But you don't seem half as surprised as I expected, Alice; I thought you would be so much surprised."

"I am not surprised at all, Ellie."

"Not!—aren't you!—why, did you know anything of this before?"

"I did not *know*, but I suspected. I thought it was very likely. I am *very* glad it is so."

"Glad!—are you glad? I am so sorry; why are you glad, Alice?"

"Why are you sorry, Ellie?"

"Oh because!—I don't know—it seems so queer!—I don't like it at all. I am *very* sorry indeed."

"For your aunt's sake, or for Mr. Van Brunt's sake?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, do you think he or she will be a loser by the bargain?"

"Why he, to be sure; I think he will; I don't think she will. I think he is a great deal too good. And besides—I wonder if he wants to really; it was settled so long ago—maybe he has changed his mind since."

"Have you any reason to think so, Ellie?" said Alice, smiling.

"I don't know; I don't think he seemed particularly glad."

"It will be safest to conclude that Mr. Van Brunt knows his own mind, my dear; and it is certainly pleasanter for us to hope so."

"But then, besides," said Ellen, with a face of great perplexity and *vacillation*, "I don't know; it don't seem right! How can I ever; must I do you think I shall have to call him anything but Mr. Van Brunt?"

Alice could not help smiling again.

"What is your objection, Ellie?"

"Why, because I *can't*! I couldn't do it somehow. It would seem so strange. Must I, Alice? Why in the world are you glad, dear Alice?"

"It smooths my way for a plan I have had in my head; you will know by-and-by why I am glad, Ellie."

"Well, I am glad if you are glad," said Ellen, sighing; "I don't know why I was so sorry, I couldn't help it; I suppose I shan't mind it after a while."

She sat for a few minutes, musing over the possibility of impossibility of ever forming her lips to the words "Uncle Abraham," "Uncle Van Brunt," or barely "Uncle"; her soul rebelled against all three. "Yet if he should think me unkind, then I must; oh, rather fifty times over than that!" Looking up, she saw a change in Alice's countenance, and tenderly asked—

"What is the matter, dear Alice? what are you thinking about?"

"I am thinking, Ellie, how I shall tell you something that will give you pain."

"Pain! you needn't be afraid of giving me pain," said Ellen, fondly, throwing her arms around her, "tell me, dear Alice; is it something I have done that is wrong? what is it?"

Alice kissed her, and burst into tears.

"What is the matter, oh, dear Alice!" said Ellen, encircling Alice's head with both her arms; "oh, don't cry! do tell me what it is!"

"It is only sorrow for you, dear Ellie."

"But why?" said Ellen in some alarm; "why are you sorry for me? I don't care, if it don't trouble you, indeed I don't! Never mind me; is it something that troubles you, dear Alice?"

"No, except for the effect it may have on others."

"Then I can bear it," said Ellen; "you need not be afraid to tell me, dear Alice; what is it? don't be sorry for me!"

But the expression of Alice's face was such that she could not help being afraid to hear; she anxiously repeated, "What is it?"

Alice fondly smoothed back the hair from her brow, looking herself somewhat anxiously and somewhat sadly upon the uplifted face.

"Suppose, Ellie," she said at length, "that you and I were taking a journey together—a troublesome, dangerous journey—and that I had a way of getting at once safe to the end of it; would you be willing to let me go, and you go without me for the rest of the way?"

"I would rather you should take me with you," said Ellen in a kind of maze of wonder and fear; "why, where are you going, Alice?"

"I think I am going home, Ellie, before you."

"Home?" said Ellen.

"Yes, home I feel it to be; it is not a strange land; I thank God it is my *home* I am going to."

Ellen sat looking at her, stupefied.

"It is your home, too, love, I trust and believe," said Alice, tenderly; "we shall be together at last. I am not sorry for myself; I only grieve to leave you alone, and others, but God knows best. We must both look to Him."

"Why, Alice," said Ellen, starting up suddenly, "what do you mean? what do you mean? I don't understand you; what do you mean?"

"Do you not understand me, Ellie?"

"But, Alice! but, Alice, *dear* Alice, what makes you say so? is there anything the matter with you?"

"Do I look well, Ellie?"

With an eye sharpened to painful keenness, Ellen sought in Alice's face for the tokens of what she wished and what she feared. It *had* once or twice lately flitted through her mind that Alice was very thin, and seemed to want her old strength, whether in riding, or walking, or any other exertion; and it *had* struck her that the bright spots of colour in Alice's face were just like what her mother's cheeks used to wear in her last illness. These thoughts had just come and gone; but now as she recalled them and was forced to acknowledge the justness of them, and her review of Alice's face pressed them home anew, hope for a moment faded. She grew white, even to her lips.

"My poor Ellie! my poor Ellie!" said Alice, pressing her little sister to her bosom, "it must be! We *must* say 'the Lord's will be done'; we must not forget He does all things well."

But Ellen rallied; she raised her head again; she could not believe what Alice had told her. To her mind it seemed an *evil too great to happen*; it could not be! Alice saw this in her look, and again sadly stroked her hair from her brow. "It must be, Ellie," she repeated.

"But have you seen somebody? have you asked somebody?" said Ellen; "some doctor?"

"I have seen, and I have asked," said Alice; "it was not necessary, but I have done both. They think as I do."

"But these Thirlwall doctors——"

"Not them; I did not apply to them. I saw an excellent physician at Randolph, the last time I went to Ventnor."

"And he said ——"

"As I have told you." Ellen's countenance fell—fell.

"It is easier for me to leave you than for you to be left, I know that, my dear little Ellie! You have no reason to be sorry for me; I *am* sorry for you: but the hand that is taking me away is one that will touch neither of us but to do *us* good; I know that too. We must both look away to our dear Saviour, and not for a moment doubt His love. I do not; you must not. Is it not said that 'He loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus'?"

"Yes," said Ellen, who never stirred her eyes from Alice's.

"And might He not, did it not rest with a word of His lips, to keep Lazarus from dying, and save his sisters from all the bitter sorrow his death caused them?"

Again Ellen said, "Yes," or her lips seemed to say it.

"And yet there were reasons, good reasons, why He should not, little as poor Martha and Mary could understand. But had He at all ceased to *love them* when He bade all that trouble come? Do you remember, Ellie—oh, how beautiful those words are!—when at last He arrived near the place, and first one sister came to Him, with the touching reminder that He might have saved them from this, and then the other, weeping and falling at His feet, and repeating, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here!' When He saw their tears, and more, saw the torn hearts their tears could not ease, He even wept with them too! Oh, I thank God for those words! He saw reason to strike, and His hand did not spare; but His love shed tears for them! and He is just the same now."

Some drops fell from Alice's eyes, not sorrowful ones; Ellen had hid her face.

"Let us never doubt His love, dear Ellie, and surely then we can bear whatever that love may bring upon us. I do trust it. I do believe it shall be well with them that fear God. I believe it will be well for me when I die, well for you, my dear, dear Ellie; well even for my father——"

She did not finish the sentence, afraid to trust herself. But oh, Ellen knew what it would have been, and it suddenly startled into life all the load of grief that had been settling heavily on her heart. Her thoughts had not looked that way before; now, when they did, this new vision of misery was too much to bear. Quite unable to con-

trol herself, and unwilling to pain Alice more than she could help, with a smothered burst of feeling she sprang away out of the door, into the woods, where she would be unseen and unheard.

And there, in the first burst of her agony, Ellen almost thought she should die. Her grief had not now indeed the goading sting of impatience; she knew the hand that gave the blow, and did not raise her own against it; she believed too what Alice had been saying, and the sense of it was, in a manner, present with her in her darkest time. But her spirit died within her; she bowed her head as if she were never to lift it up again; and she was ready to say with Job, "What good is my life to me!"

It was long, very long after, when slowly and mournfully she came in again to kiss Alice before going back to her aunt's. She would have done it hurriedly and turned away; but Alice held her and looked sadly for a minute into the woe-begone little face, then clasped her close and kissed her again and again.

"Oh, Alice," sobbed Ellen on her neck, "aren't you mistaken? maybe you are mistaken."

"I am not mistaken, my dear Ellie, my own Ellie," said Alice's clear, sweet voice; "nor sorry, except for others. I will talk with you more about this. You will be sorry for me at first, and then I hope you will be glad. It is only that I am going home a little before you. Remember what I was saying to you a while ago. Will you tell Mr. Van Brunt I should like to see him for a few minutes some time when he has leisure? And come to me early to-morrow, love."

Ellen could hardly get home. Her blinded eyes could not see where she was stepping; and again and again her fulness of heart got the better of everything else, and unmindful of the growing twilight, she sat down on a stone by the wayside, or flung herself on the ground to let sorrows have full sway.

It was getting dark, and a little way from the gate, on the road, she met Mr. Van Brunt.

"Why, I was beginning to get scared about you," said he, "I was coming to see where you was. How came you so late?"

Ellen made no answer, and as he now came nearer and he could see more distinctly, his tone changed.

"What's the matter?" said he, "you ha'n't been well! what has happened? what ails you, Ellen?"

In astonishment and then in alarm, he saw that she was unable to speak, and anxiously and kindly begged her to let him know what

was the matter, and if he could do anything. Ellen shook her head.

"Ain't Miss Alice well?" said he; "you ha'n't heerd no bad news up there on the hill, have you?"

Ellen was not willing to answer this question with yea or nay. She recovered herself enough to give him Alice's message.

"I'll be sure and go," said he, "but you ha'n't told me yet what's the matter! Has anything happened!"

"No," said Ellen; "don't ask me—she'll tell you—don't ask me."

"I guess I'll go up the first thing in the morning then," said he "before breakfast."

"No," said Ellen; "better not—perhaps she wouldn't be up so early."

"After breakfast, then—I'll go up right after breakfast."

As soon as possible she made her escape from Miss Fortune's eye and questions of curiosity which she could not bear to answer, and got to her own room. There the first thing she did was to find the eleventh chapter of John. She read it as she had never read it before; she found in it what she had never found before; one of those cordials that none but the sorrowing drink. On the love of Christ, as there shown, little Ellen's heart fastened; and with that one sweetening thought amidst all its deep sadness, her sleep that night might have been envied by many a luxurious roller in pleasure.

At Alice's wish she immediately took up her quarters at the parsonage, to leave her no more. But she could not see much difference in her from what she had been for several weeks past; and with the natural hopefulness of childhood, her mind presently almost refused to believe the extremity of the evil which had been threatened. Alice herself was constantly cheerful, and sought by all means to further Ellen's cheerfulness; though careful at the same time to forbid, as far as she could, the rising of the hopes she saw Ellen was inclined to cherish.

One evening they were sitting together at the window, looking out upon the same old lawn and distant landscape, now in all the fresh greenness of the young spring. They had been for some time gazing thoughtfully on the loveliness that was abroad.

"I used to think," said Alice, "that it must be a very hard thing to leave such a beautiful world. Did you ever think so, Ellie?"

"I don't know," said Ellen faintly, "I don't remember."

"I used to think so," said Alice. "But I do not now, Ellie; my feeling has changed. Do *you* feel so now, Ellie?"

"Oh, why do you talk about it, dear Alice?"

"For many reasons, dear Ellie. Come here and sit in my lap again."

"I am afraid you cannot bear it."

"Yes, I can. Sit here, and let your head rest where it used to," and Alice laid her cheek upon Ellen's forehead; "you are a great comfort to me, dear Ellie."

"Oh, Alice, don't say so—you'll kill me!" exclaimed Ellen in great distress.

"Why should I not say so, love?" said Alice, soothingly. "I like to say it, and you will be glad to know it by-and-by. You are a great comfort to me."

"And what have you been to me?" said Ellen, weeping bitterly.

"What I cannot be much longer; and I want to accustom you to think of it, and to think of it rightly. I want you to know that if I am sorry at all in the thought, it is for the sake of others, not myself. Ellie, you yourself will be glad for me in a little while; you will not wish me back."

Ellen shook her head.

"I know you will not—after a while; and I shall leave you in good hands—I have arranged for that, my dear little sister."

The sorrowing child neither knew nor cared what she meant, but a mute caress answered the *spirit* of Alice's words.

"Look up, Ellie—look out again. Lovely—lovely! all that is,—but I know heaven is a great deal more lovely."

Ellen could say nothing.

"After all, Ellie, it is not beautiful things nor a beautiful world that make people happy—it is loving and being loved; and that is the reason why I am happy in the thought of heaven. I shall, if He receives me—I shall be with my Saviour; I shall see Him and know Him, without any of the clouds that come between here. I am often forgetting and displeasing Him now, never serving Him well nor loving Him right. I shall be glad to find myself where all that will be done with for ever. I shall be like Him. Why do you cry so, Ellie?" said Alice, tenderly.

"I can't help it, Alice."

"It is only my love for you—and for two more—that could make me wish to stay here,—nothing else; and I give all that up, because I do

not know what is best for you or myself. And, I look to meet you all again before long. Try to think of it as I do, Ellie."

"But what shall I do without you?" said poor Ellen.

"I will tell you, Ellie. You must come here and take my place, and take care of those I leave behind; will you? and they will take care of you."

"But," said Ellen, looking up eagerly, "Aunt Fortune——"

"I have managed all that. Will you do it, Ellen? I shall feel easy and happy about you, and far easier and happier about my father, if I leave you established here, to be to him, as far as you can, what I have been. Will you promise me, Ellie?"

In words it was not possible; but what silent kisses, and the close pressure of the arms round Alice's neck could say, was said.

"I am satisfied, then," said Alice, presently. "My father will be your father—think him so, dear Ellie, and I know John will take care of you. And my place will not be empty. I am very, very glad."

Ellen felt her place surely would be empty, but she could not say so.

"It was for this I was so glad of your aunt's marriage, Ellie," Alice soon went on. "I foresaw she might raise some difficulties in my way, hard to remove perhaps; but now I have seen Mr. Van Brunt, and he has promised me that nothing shall hinder your taking up your abode and making your home entirely here. Though I believe, Ellie, he would truly have loved to have you in his own house."

"I am sure he would," said Ellen, "but oh, how much rather——"

"He behaved very well about it the other morning; in a very manly, frank, kind way; showed a good deal of feeling, I think, too. He gave me to understand that for his own sake he should be extremely sorry to let you go; but he assured me that nothing over which he had any control should stand in the way of your good."

"He is *very* kind—he is *very* good—he is always so," said Ellen. "I love Mr. Van Brunt very much. He always was as kind to me as he could be."

"You must be happy, dear Ellie, in knowing that I am. I am happy now. I enjoy all this, and I love you all, but I can leave it and can leave you,—yes, both,—for I would seek Jesus! He who has taught me to love Him will not forsake me now. Godness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord for ever. I thank Him! Oh, I thank Him!"

Alice's face did not belie her words, though her eyes shone through tears.

"Ellie, dear, you must love Him with all your heart, and live constantly in His presence. I know if you do He will make you happy in any event. He can always give more than He takes away. Oh, how good He is! and what wretched returns we make Him! I was miserable when John first went away to Doncaster; I did not know how to bear it. But now, Ellie, I think I can see it has done me good, and I can even be thankful for it. All things are ours, all things; the world, and life, and death too."

"Alice," said Ellen, as well as she could, "you know what you were saying to me the other day?"

"About what, love?"

"That about—you know,—that chapter——"

"About the death of Lazarus."

"Yes. It has comforted me very much."

"So it has me, Ellie. It has been exceeding sweet to me at different times. Come sing to me—'How firm a foundation.'"

From time to time Alice led to this kind of conversation, both for Ellen's sake and her own pleasure. Meanwhile she made her go on with all her usual studies and duties; and but for these talks Ellen would have scarce known how to believe that it could be true which she feared.

The wedding of Miss Fortune and Mr. Van Brunt was a very quiet one. It happened at far too busy a time of year, and they were too cool calculators, and looked upon their union in much too business-like a point of view, to dream of such a wild thing as a wedding tour, or even resolve upon so troublesome a thing as a wedding-party. Miss Fortune would not have left her cheese and butter-making to see all the New Yorks and Bostons that ever were built; and she would have scorned a trip to Randolph. And Mr. Van Brunt would as certainly have wished himself all the while back among his furrows and crops. So one day they were quietly married at home, the Rev. Mr. Clark having been fetched from Thirlwall for the purpose. Mr. Van Brunt would have preferred that Mr. Humphreys should perform the ceremony; but Miss Fortune was quite decided in favour of the Thirlwall gentleman, and of course he it was.

The talk ran high all over the country on the subject of this marriage, and opinions were greatly divided; some congratulating Mr. Van Brunt on having made himself one of the richest landholders "in town" by the junction of another fat farm to his own; some pitying him for having got more than his match within doors, and "guessing he'd missed his reckoning for once."

CHAPTER XLII.

ONE LESS IN THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD.

It was impossible at first to make Mr. Humphreys believe that Alice was right in her notion about her health. The greatness of the evil was such that his mind refused to receive it, much as Ellen's had done. His unbelief, however, lasted longer than hers. He saw much less of his daughter; and when he was with her, it was impossible for Alice, with all her efforts, to speak to him as freely and plainly as she was in the habit of speaking to Ellen. The consequences were such as grieved her, but could not be helped.

As soon as it was known that her health was failing, Sophia Marshman came and took up her abode at the parsonage. Ellen was almost sorry; it broke up in a measure the sweet and peaceful way of life she and Alice had held together ever since her own coming. Miss Sophia could not make a third in their conversations. But as Alice's strength grew less and she needed more attendance and help, it was plain her friend's being there was a happy thing for both Alice and Ellen. Miss Sophia was active, cheerful, untiring in her affectionate care; always pleasant in manner and temper; a very useful person in a house where one was ailing. Mrs. Vawse was often there too, and to her Ellen clung, whenever she came, as to a pillar of strength. Miss Sophia could do nothing to help *her*; Mrs. Vawse could, a great deal.

Alice had refused to write or allow others to write to her brother. She said he was just finishing his course of study at Doncaster; she would not have him disturbed or broken off by bad news from home. In August he would be quite through; the first of August he would be home.

Before the middle of June, however, her health began to fail much more rapidly than she had counted upon. It became too likely that if she waited for his regular return at the first of August she would see but little of her brother. She at last reluctantly consented that Mrs. Chauncey should write to him; and from that moment counted the days.

Her father had scarcely till now given up his old confidence respecting her. He came into her room one morning when just about to set out for Carra-carra to visit one or two of his poor parishioners.

"How are you to-day, my daughter?" he asked, tenderly.

"Easy, papa, and happy," said Alice.

"You are looking better," said he. "We shall have you well again among us yet."

There was some sorrow for him in Alice's smile, as she looked up at him and answered, "Yes, papa, in the land where the inhabitants shall no more say, 'I am sick.'"

He kissed her hastily and went out.

"I almost wish I was in your place, Alice," said Miss Sophia. "I hope I may be half as happy when my time comes."

"What right have you to hope so, Sophia?" said Alice, rather sadly.

"To be sure," said the other, after a pause, "you have been ten times as good as I. I don't wonder you feel easy when you look back and think how blameless your life has been."

"Sophia, Sophia!" said Alice, "you know it is not that. I never did a good thing in all my life that was not mixed and spoiled with evil. I never came up to the full measure of duty in any matter."

"But surely," said Miss Sophia, "if one does the best one can, it will be accepted?"

"It won't do to trust to that, Sophia. God's law requires perfection, and nothing less than perfection will be received as payment of its demand. If you owe a hundred dollars, and your creditor will not hold you quit for anything less than the whole sum, it is of no manner of signification whether you offer him ten or twenty."

"Why, according to that," said Miss Sophia, "it makes no difference what kind of life one leads."

Alice sighed and shook her head.

"The fruit shows what the tree is. Love to God *will* strive to please Him—always."

"And is it of no use to strive to please Him?"

"Of no manner of use, if you make that your *trust*."

"Well, I don't see what one *is* to trust to," said Miss Sophia, "if it isn't a good life."

"I will answer you," said Alice, with a smile in which there was no sorrow, "in some words that I love very much, of an old Scotchman, I think,—'I have taken all my good deeds and all my bad, and have cast them together in a heap before the Lord; and from them all I have fled to Jesus Christ, and in Him alone I have sweet peace.'"

Sophia was silenced for a minute by her look.

"Well," said she, "I don't understand it; that is what George is always talking about; but I can't understand him."

"I am *very* sorry you cannot," said Alice, gravely.

They were both silent for a little while.

"If all Christians were like you," said Miss Sophia, "I might think more about it; but they are such a dull set; there seems to be no life nor pleasure among them."

"You judge," she said, "like the rest of the world, of that which they see not. After all, *they* know best whether they are happy. What do you think of Mrs. Vawse?"

"I don't know what to think of her; she is wonderful to me; she is past my comprehension entirely. Don't make *her* an example."

"No, religion has done that for me. What do you think of your brother?"

"George—*he* is happy—there is no doubt of that; he is the happiest person in the family, by all odds; but then I think he has a natural knack at being happy; it is impossible for anything to put him out."

Alice smiled and shook her head again.

"Sophistry, Sophia. What do you think of *me*?"

"I don't see what reason you have to be anything but happy."

"What have I to make me so?"

Sophia was silent. Alice laid her thin hand upon hers.

"I am leaving all I love in this world. Should I be happy if I were not going to somewhat I love better? Should I be happy if I had no secure prospect of meeting with them again?—or if I were doubtful of my reception in that place whither I hope to go."

Sophia burst into tears. "Well, I don't know," said she; "I suppose you are right; but I don't understand it."

Alice drew her face down to hers and whispered something in her ear.

Mr. Humphreys came in after to see his daughter, but never stayed long. It was plain he could not bear it. It might have been difficult too for Alice to bear, but she wished for her brother. She reckoned the time from Mrs. Chauncey's letter to that when he might be looked for; but some irregularities in the course of the post-office made it impossible to count with certainty upon the exact time of his arrival. Meanwhile her failure was very rapid. Mrs. Vawse began to fear he would not arrive in time.

The weeks of June ran out; the roses, all but a few late kinds, blossomed and died.

July came.

• One morning when Ellen went into her room, Alice drew her close to her and said, "You remember, Ellie, in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' when Christiana and her companions were sent to go over the river? I think the Messenger has come for me. You mustn't cry, love;—listen—this is the token He seems to bring me,—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love." I am sure of it, Ellie; so don't cry for me. You have been my dear comfort—my blessing—we shall love each other in heaven, Ellie."

Alice kissed her earnestly several times, and then Ellen escaped from her arms and fled away. It was long before she could come back again. But she came at last; and went on through all that day as she had done for weeks before. • The day seemed long, for every member of the family was on the watch for John's arrival; and it was thought his sister would not live to see another. • It wore away; hour after hour passed without his coming; and the night fell. Alice showed no impatience, but she evidently wished and watched for him; and Ellen, whose affection read her face and knew what to make of the look at the opening door, the eye turned towards the window,—the attitude of listening,—grew feverish with her intense desire that she should be gratified. •

From motive of convenience, Alice had moved upstairs to a room that John generally occupied when he was at home; directly over the sitting-room, and with pleasant windows towards the east. Mrs. Chauncey, Miss Sophia, and Mrs. Vawse were all there. Alice was lying quietly on the bed, and seemed to be dozing; but Ellen noticed, after lights were brought, that every now and then she opened her eyes and gave an enquiring look round the room. Ellen could not bear it; slipping softly out, she went downstairs and seated herself on the threshold of the glass door, as if by watching there she could be any nearer the knowledge of what she wished for.

It was a perfectly still summer night. • The moon shone brightly on the little lawn, and poured its rays over Ellen, just as it had done one well-remembered evening near a year ago. Ellen's thoughts went back to it. How like and how unlike! All around was just the same as it had been then; the cool moonlight upon the distant fields, the trees in the gap lit up, as then, the lawn a flood of brightness. But there was no happy party gathered there now; they were scattered. One was away; one a sorrowful watcher alone in the moonlight, one waiting to be gone where there is no need of moon or stars for evermore. •

While Ellen was thinking of these things, there came to her ear through the perfect stillness of the night, the faint, far-off, not-to-be-mistaken sound of quick-coming horse's feet, nearer and nearer every second. It came with a mingled pang of pain and pleasure, both very acute; she rose instantly to her feet, and stood pressing her hand to her heart while the quick-measured beat of hoofs grew louder and louder, until it ceased at the very door. 'The minutes were few, but they were moments of intense bitterness. The tired horse stooped his head, as the rider slung himself from the saddle and came to the door where Ellen stood fixed. A look asked, and a look answered, the question that lips could not speak. Ellen only pointed the way, and uttered the word, "Upstairs"; and John rushed thither. He checked himself, however, at the door of the room, and opened it and went in as calmly as if he had but come from a walk. But his caution was very needless. Alice knew his step, she knew *his horse's step* too well; she had raised herself up and stretched out both arms towards him before he entered. In another moment they were round his neck, and she was supported in his. There was a long, long silence.

"Are you happy, Alice?" whispered her brother.

"Perfectly. This was all I wanted. Kiss me, dear John."

As he did so, again and again, she felt his tears on her cheek, and put up her hands to his face to wipe them away; kissed him then, and then once again laid her head on his breast. They remained so a little while without stirring; except that some whispers were exchanged too low for others to hear, and once more she raised her face to kiss him. A few minutes after those who could look saw his colour change; he felt the arms unclasp their hold; and as he laid her gently back on the pillow, they fell languidly down; the will and the power that had sustained them were gone. *Alice* was gone; but the departing spirit had left a ray of brightness on its earthly house; there was a half-smile on the sweet face, of most entire peace and satisfaction. Her brother looked for a moment, closed the eyes kissed, once and again, the sweet lips, and left the room.

Ellen saw him no more that night, nor knew how he passed it. For her, reared with grief and excitement, it was spent in long heavy slumber. From the pitch to which her spirits had been wrought by care, sorrow, and self-restraint, they now suddenly and completely sank down; naturally and happily, she lost all sense of trouble in sleep.

When sleep at last left her, and she stole downstairs into the

sitting-room in the morning, it was rather early. Nobody was stirring about the house but herself. It seemed deserted; the old sitting-room looked empty and forlorn; the stillness was oppressive. Ellen could not bear it. Softly opening the glass door, she went out upon the lawn, where everything was sparkling in the early freshness of the summer morning. How could it look so pleasant without, when all pleasantness was gone within? It pressed upon Ellen's heart.

Just then a voice close beside her said low, as if the speaker might not trust its higher tones, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

How that sound struck upon Ellen's ear! With an indescribable air of mingled tenderness, weariness, and sorrow, she slowly rose from her seat and put both her arms round the speaker's neck. Neither said a word; but to Ellen the arm that held her was more than all words; it was the dividing line between her and the world, on this side everything, on that side nothing.

No word was spoken for many minutes.

"My dear Ellen," said her brother, softly, "how came you here

"I don't know," whispered Ellen, "there was nobody there—I couldn't stay in the house."

"Shall we go home now?"

"Oh, yes—whenever you please."

But neither moved yet. Ellen had raised her head; she still stood with her arm upon John's shoulder; the eyes of both were on the scene before them; the thoughts of neither. He presently spoke again.

"Let us try to love our God better, Ellie, the less we have left to love in this world; that is His meaning—let sorrow but bring us closer to Him. Dear Alice is well—she is well, and we are made to suffer, we know and we love the hand that has done it, do we not, Ellie? We must weep, because we are left alone, but for her 'I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!'"

As he spoke in low and sweet tones, Ellen's tears stopped.

"Shall we go home, Ellie?" said her brother, after another silence. She rose up instantly and said yes. But he held her still, and looking for a moment at the tokens of watching and grief and care in her countenance, he gently kissed the pale little face, adding a word of endearment which almost broke Ellen's heart again. Then taking her hand they went down the mountain together.

CHAPTER XLIII

THOSE THAT WERE LEFT.

THE whole Marshman family arrived to day from Ventnor, some to see Alice's lovely remains, and all to follow them to the grave. The parsonage could not hold so many, the two Mr Marshmans, therefore, with Major and Mrs Gillespie, made their quarters at Thurlwall. Marjory's hands were full enough with those that were left.

In the afternoon, however, she found time for a visit to the room—the room. She was standing at the foot of the bed, gazing on the sweet face she loved so dearly, when Miss Chauncy and Mrs. Vawse came up for the same purpose. All three stood there in silence.

Late in the afternoon of the next day Ellen was sitting in the library with Mr Humphreys when she heard steps coming along the hall—steps of two persons; the door opened, and John and a strange gentleman came in. No stranger to Ellen—she knew him in a moment, it was her old friend—her friend of the boat—Mr George Marshman.

Mr Humphreys rose up to meet him, and the two gentlemen shook hands in silence. Ellen had at first shrunk out of the way to the other side of the room, and now when she saw an opportunity she was going to make her escape, but John gently detained her, and she stood still by his side, though with a kind of feeling that it was not there the best place or time for her old friend to recognise her. He was sitting by Mr Humphreys and for the present quite occupied with him, and it was not till John made some slight remark that Mr Marshman turned his head this way, he looked for a moment in some surprise, and then said, his countenance lightening, "Is that Ellen Montgomery?"

Ellen sprang across at that word to take his outstretched hand. But as she felt the well remembered grasp of it, and met the whole look, the thought of which she had treasured up for years, it was too much. Back as in a flood to her heart seemed to come at once all the thoughts and feelings of the time since then, the difference of this meeting from the joyful one she had so often pictured to herself; the sorrow of that time mixed with the sorrow now, and the sense that the very hand that had wiped those first tears away was the one now laid in the dust by death. All thronged on her heart at once.

and it was too much. She had scarce touched Mr. Marshman's hand when she hastily withdrew her own, and gave way to an overwhelming burst of sorrow. It was infectious. For a few minutes the silence of stifled sobs was in the room, till Ellen recovered enough to make her escape; and then the colour of sorrow was lightened in one breast at least.

"Brother," said Mr. Humphreys, "I can hear you now better than I could a little while ago. I had almost forgotten that God is good 'Light in the darkness'; I see it now. That child has given me a lesson."

Later in the evening Ellen was sitting beside Mr. Marshman on the sofa, looking and listening—he was like a piece of old music to her—when John came to the back of the sofa and said he wanted to speak to her. She went with him to the other side of the room.

"Ellie," said he, in a low voice, "I think my father would like to hear you sing a hymn; do you think you could?"

Ellen looked up, with a peculiar mixture of uncertainty and resolution in her countenance, and said, "Yes."

"Not if it will pain you too much, and not unless you think you can surely go through with it, Ellen," he said, gently.

"No," said Ellen; "I will try."

"Will it not give you too much pain? do you think you can?"

"No—I will try," she repeated.

As she went along the hall she said and resolved to herself that she *would* do it. The library was dark; coming from the light Ellen at first could see nothing. John placed her in a chair, and went away himself to a little distance, where he remained perfectly still. She covered her face with her hands for a minute, and prayed for strength; she was afraid to try. What should she sing? All that class of hymns that bore directly on the subject of their sorrow must be left on one side; she hardly dared think of them. Instinctively she took up another class, that without baring the wound would lay the balm close to it. A few minutes of deep stillness were in the dark room; then very low, and in tones that trembled a little, rose the words—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds."

Ellen paused a minute after finishing the hymn. There was not a sound to be heard in the room. She thought of the hymn, "Loving Kindness"; but the tune, and the spirit of the words, was too lively. Her mother's favourite, "'Tis my happiness below," but Ellen could

not venture that; she strove to forget it as fast as possible. She at last decided on, "Hark my soul, it is the Lord." Next came to her mind the beautiful, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord." She went through all the seven long verses. Still, when Ellen paused at the end of this the breathless silence seemed to invite her to go on. She waited a minute to gather breath. The blessed words had gone down into her very heart; did they ever seem half so sweet before? She was cheered and strengthened, and thought she could go through with the next hymn, though it had been much loved and often used both by her mother and Alice, and she sang sweetly and clearly, "Jesus, lover of my soul."

Still silence; "silence that spoke"! Ellen did not know what it said, except that her hearers did not wish her to stop. Her next was a favourite hymn of them all, "What are these in bright array."

Ellen had allowed her thoughts to travel too far along with the words, for in the last lines her voice was unsteady and faint. She was fain to make a longer pause than usual to recover. But in vain; the tender nerve was touched; there was no stilling its quivering.

"Ellen," said Mr. Humphreys then after a few minutes. She rose and went to the sofa. He folded her close to his breast.

"Thank you, my child," he said, presently; "you have been a comfort to me. Nothing but a choir of angels could have been sweeter."

As Ellen went away back through the hall her tears almost choked her; but for all that there was a strong throb of pleasure at her heart.

"I have been a comfort to him," she repeated. "Oh, dear Alice! so I will."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE LITTLE SPIRIT THAT HAUNTED THE BIG HOUSE.

THE whole Marshman family returned to Ventnor immediately after the funeral, Mr. George excepted; he stayed with Mr. Humphreys over the Sabbath, and preached for him; and much to everyone's pleasure lingered still a day or two longer; then he was obliged to leave them. John also must go back to Doncaster for a few weeks; he would not be able to get home again before the early part of August. For the month between, and as much longer indeed as possible, Mrs. Marshman wished to have Ellen at Ventnor; assuring her that it was to be her home always whenever she chose to make it

so. At first neither Mrs. Marshman nor her daughters would take any denial; and old Mrs. Marshman was fixed upon it. But Ellen begged with tears that she might stay at home and begin at once, as far as she could, to take Alice's place. Her kind friends insisted that it would do her harm to be left alone for so long, at such a season. Mr. Humphreys at the best of times kept very much to himself, and now he would more than ever; she would be very lonely. "But how lonely *he* will be if I go away!" said Ellen; "I can't go." Finding that her heart was set upon it, and that it would be a real grief to her to go to Ventnor, John at last joined to excuse her; and he made an arrangement with Mrs. Vawse instead that she should come and stay at the parsonage till he came back. This gave Ellen great satisfaction; and her kind Ventnor friends were obliged unwillingly to leave her.

"Margery," said Ellen one day, "I wish you would tell me all the things Alice used to do; so that I may begin to do them, you know, as soon as I can."

"What things, Miss Ellen?"

"I mean the things she used to do about the house, or to help you, don't you know? all sorts of things. I want to know them all, so that I may do them as she did. I want to very much."

"Oh, Miss Ellen, dear," said Margery, tearfully, "you are too little and tender to do them things; I'd be sorry to see you, indeed!"

"Why no, I am not, Margery," said Ellen; "don't you know how I used to do at Aunt Fortune's? Now tell me please, dear Margery. If I can't do it, I won't, you know."

So Margery told her the things Alice used to do, and Ellen decided that, so far as possible, they should now fall upon her.

When Mr. Van Brunt informed his wife of Ellen's purpose to desert her service, and make her future home at the parsonage, the lady's astonishment was only less than her indignation; the latter not at all lessened by learning that Ellen was to become the adopted child of the house. For a while her words of displeasure were poured forth in a torrent; Mr. Van Brunt meantime saying very little, and standing by like a steadfast rock that the waves dash *past*, not *upon*. She declared that this was "the cap-sheaf of Miss Humphreys' doings; she *might* have been wise enough to have expected as much; she wouldn't have been such a fool if she had! This was what she had let Ellen go there for! a pretty return!" But she went on. "She wondered who they thought they had to deal with; did they think she was going to let Ellen go in that way? *she* had the first and only right to her; and Ellen had no more business to go and give herself away

than one of her own; they would find it out, she guessed, pretty quick, Mr John and all, she'd have her back in no time.' What were her thoughts and feelings when, after having spent her breath, she found her husband quietly opposed to this conclusion, words cannot tell. Her words could not, she was absolutely dumb, till he had said his say and then, appalled by the serenity of his manner she left indignation on one side for the present and began to argue the matter. But Mr Van Brunt coolly said he had promised; she might get as many helps as she liked, he would pay for them and welcome; but Ellen would have to stay where she was. He had promised Miss Alice, and he wouldn't break his word for kings, lords, and commons. A most extraordinary expletive for a good Republican—which Mr Van Brunt had probably inherited from his father and grandfather. What can waves do against a rock? The whilom Miss Fortune disdained a struggle which must end in her own confusion, and wisely kept her chagrin to herself, never even approaching the subject afterwards, with him or any other person. Ellen had left the whole matter to Mr Van Brunt, expecting a storm and not wishing to share it. Happily it all blew over.

At last John arrived. It seemed to Ellen for several days that he was more grave and talked less than even the last time he had been at home.

As Alice had anticipated, her brother was called to take charge of the church at Randolph, and at the same time another more distant was offered him. He refused them both, rightly judging that his place for the present was at home. But the call from Randolph being pressed upon him very much, he at length agreed to preach for them during the winter; riding thither for the purpose every Saturday, and returning to Carra cara on Monday.

As the winter wore on, a grave cheerfulness stole over the household. Ellen little thought how much she had to do with it. She never heard Margery tell her husband, which she often did with great affection, "that that blessed child was the light of the house," and those who felt it the most said nothing. Ellen was sure, indeed, from the way in which Mr. Humphreys spoke to her, looked at her, now and then laid his hand on her head, and sometimes, very rarely, kissed her forehead, that he loved her and loved to see her about; and that her wish of supplying Alice's place was in some little measure fulfilled. As for Mr. John, it never came into her head to think whether she was a comfort to him; he was a comfort to her; she looked at it in quite another point of view. He had gone to his old

sleeping-room upstairs, which Margery had settled with herself he would make his study; and for that he had taken the sitting-room. This was Ellen's study too, so she was constantly with him; and of the quietest she thought her movements would have to be.

"What are you stepping so softly for?" said he, one day, catching her hand as she was passing near him.

"You were busy—I thought you were busy," said Ellen.

"And what then?"

"I was afraid of disturbing you."

"You never disturb me," said he; "you need not fear it. Step as you please, and do not shut the doors carefully. I see you and hear you; but without any disturbance."

Ellen found it was so. But she was an exception to the general rule; other people disturbed him, as she had one or two occasions of knowing.

Every day when the weather would permit, the Black Prince and the Brownie with their respective riders might be seen abroad in the country far and wide. In the course of their rides, Ellen's horsemanship was diligently perfected. Very often their turning-place was on the top of the Cat's Back, and the horses had a rest and Mrs. Vawse a visit before they went down again. They had long walks too by hill and dale; pleasantly silent or pleasantly talkative, all pleasant to Ellen!

Her only lonely and sorrowful time was when John was gone to Randolph. It began early Saturday morning, and perhaps ended with Sunday night; for all Monday was hope and expectation. Even Saturday she had not much time to mope; that was the day for her great week's mending. When John was gone and her morning affairs were out of the way, Ellen brought out her work-basket, and established herself on the sofa for a quiet day's sewing without the least fear of interruption. But sewing did not always hinder thinking. And then certainly the room did seem very empty, and very still; and the clock, which she never heard the rest of the week, kept ticking an ungracious reminder that she was alone. Ellen would sometimes forget it in the intense interest of some nice little piece of repair which must be exquisitely done in a wristband or a glove; and then perhaps Margery would softly open the door and come in for a talk.

Saturday evening she generally contrived to busy herself in her books. But when Sunday morning came with its calmness and brightness; when the business of the week was put away, and quietness abroad and at home invited to recollection, then Ellen's thoughts went back to old times, and then she missed the calm sweet face that

had agreed so well with the day. She missed her in the morning, when the early sun streamed in through the empty room. She missed her at the breakfast-table, where John was not to take her place. On the wide to church, where Mr. Humphreys was her silent companion, and every tree in the road and every opening in the landscape seemed to call Alice to see it with her. Very much she missed her in church. The empty seat beside her, the unused hymn-book on the shelf, the want of her sweet voice in the singing, oh, how it went to Ellen's heart. And Mr. Humphreys' grave steadfast look and tone kept it in her mind; she saw it was in his. Those Sunday mornings tried Ellen. At first they were bitterly sad; her tears used to flow abundantly whenever they could unseen. Time softened this feeling.

While Mr. Humphreys went on to his second service in the village beyond, Ellen stayed at Carra-carra, and tried to teach a Sunday-school. She determined as far as she could to supply beyond the home circle the loss that was not felt only there. She was able, however, to gather together but her own four children whom she had constantly taught from the beginning, and two others. The rest were scattered. After her lunch, which, having no companion but Margery, was now a short one, Ellen went next to the two old women that Alice had been accustomed to attend for the purpose of reading, and what Ellen called preaching. These poor old people had sadly lamented the loss of the faithful friend whose place they never expected to see supplied in this world, and whose kindness had constantly sweetened their lives with one great pleasure a week. Ellen felt afraid to take so much upon herself as to try to do for them what Alice had done; however, she resolved, and at the very first attempt their gratitude and joy far overpaid her for the effort she had made. Practice and the motive she had soon enabled Ellen to remember and repeat faithfully the greater part of Mr. Humphreys' morning sermon. Reading the Bible to Mrs. Blockson was easy; she had often done that; and to repair the loss of Alice's pleasant comments and explanations she bethought her of her "Pilgrim's Progress." To her delight the old woman heard it greedily, and seemed to take great comfort in it; often referring to what Ellen had read before, and begging to hear such a piece over again. Ellen generally went home pretty thoroughly tired, yet feeling happy; the pleasure of doing good still far overbalanced the pains.

Sunday evening was another lonely time; Ellen spent it as best she could. Sometimes with her Bible and prayer, and then she ceased to be lonely; sometimes with so many pleasant thoughts that had sprung

up out of the employments of the morning that she could not be sorrowful; sometimes she could not help being both. In any case, she was very apt when the darkness fell to take to singing hymns; and it grew to be a habit with Mr. Humphreys when he heard her to come out of his study and lie down upon the sofa and listen, suffering no light in the room but that of the fire. Ellen never was better pleased than when her Sunday evenings were spent so. She sang with wonderful pleasure when she sang for him; and she made it her business to fill her memory with all the beautiful hymns she ever knew or could find, or that he liked particularly.

With the first opening of her eyes on Monday morning came the thought, "John will be at home to-day!" That was enough to carry Ellen pleasantly through whatever the day might bring. She generally kept her mending of stockings for Monday morning, because with that thought in head she did not mind anything. She had no visits from Margery on Monday; but Ellen sang over her work, sprang about with happy energy, and studied her hardest; for John in what he expected her to do made no calculations for work of which he knew nothing. He was never at home till late in the day; and when Ellen had done all she had to do, and set the supper-table with punctilious care, and a face of busy happiness it would have been a pleasure to see, if there had been anyone to look at it, she would take what happened to be the favourite book and plant herself near the glass door; like a very epicure, to enjoy both the present and the future at once. Even then the present often made her forget the future; she would be lost in her book, perhaps hunting the elephant in India or fighting Nelson's battles over again, and the first news she would have of what she had set herself there to watch for would be the click of the door-lock or a tap on the glass, for the horse was almost always left at the farther door. Back then she came from India or the Nile: down went the book; Ellen had no more thought but for what was before her.

For the rest of that evening the measure of Ellen's happiness was full. It did not matter whether John were in a talkative or a thoughtful mood; whether he spoke to her and looked at her or not; it was pleasure enough to feel that he was there. She was perfectly satisfied merely to sit down near him, though she did not get a word by the hour together.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

ONE Monday evening, John being tired, was resting in the corner of the sofa. The silence had lasted a long time. Ellen thought so, and standing near, she by-and-bye put her hand gently into one of his which he was thoughtfully passing through the locks of his hair. Her hand was clasped immediately, and quitting his abstracted look he asked what she had been doing that day? Ellen's thoughts went back to toes and stockings and a long rent in her dress; she merely answered, smiling, that she had been busy.

"Too busy, I'm afraid. Come round here and sit down. What have you been busy about?"

Ellen never thought of trying to evade a question of his. She coloured and hesitated. He did not press it any farther.

"John, there is something I have been wanting to ask you this great while."

"What is it Ellen?"

"I wish very much—I was going to ask—if you would have any objection to let me read one of your sermons."

"None in the world, Ellie," said he, smiling; but they have never been written yet."

"Not written!"

"No; there is all I had to guide me yesterday."

"A half-sheet of paper! and only written on one side! Oh, I can make nothing of this. What is *this*? Hebrew?"

"Shorthand."

"And is that all? I cannot understand it," said Ellen, sighing as she gave back the paper.

"What if you were to go with me next time? They want to see you very much at Ventnor."

"So do I want to see them," said Ellen; "very much indeed."

"Mrs. Marshman sent a most earnest request by me that you would come to her the next time I go to Randolph."

Ellen gave the matter a very serious consideration; if one might judge by her face.

"What do you say to it?"

"I should like to go—*very* much," said Ellen, slowly, "but——"

"But you do not think it would be pleasant?"

"No, no," said Ellen, laughing, "I don't mean that; but I think I would rather not."

"Why?"

"Oh, I have some reasons."

"You must give me very good ones, or I think I shall overrule your decision, Ellie."

"I have *very* good ones—plenty of them—only——"

A glance, somewhat comical in its keenness, overturned Ellen's hesitation.

"I have indeed," said she, laughing, "only I did not want to tell you. The reason why I didn't wish to go was because I thought I should be missed. You don't know how much I miss you," said she, with tears in her eyes.

"That is what I was afraid of. Your reasons make against you, Ellie."

"I hope not. I don't think they ought."

"But, Ellie, I am very sure my father would rather miss you once or twice than have you want what would be good for you."

"I know that! I am sure of that! but that don't alter my feeling, you know. And besides—that isn't all."

"Who else will miss you?"

Ellen's quick look seemed to say that he knew too much already, and that she did not wish him to know more. He did not repeat the question, but Ellen felt that her secret was no longer entirely her own.

"And what do you do, Ellie, when you feel lonely?" he went on.

"Different things," she answered.

"The best remedy for it is prayer. In seeking the face of our best Friend we forget the loss of others. Do you try it?" said he, softly.

Ellen looked up; she could not well speak at that moment.

"There is an antidote in that for every trouble. You know who said, 'He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.'"

"It troubles me," said he, after a pause, "to leave you so much alone. I don't know that it were not best to take you with me every week."

"Oh, no!" said Ellen, "don't think of me. I don't mind it indeed. I do not always feel so—sometimes; but I get along very well; and I would rather stay here, indeed I would. I am always happy as soon as Monday morning comes."

He rose up suddenly and began to walk up and down the room.

"Mr. John——"

"What, Ellie?"

"I do sometimes seek His face very much when I cannot find it."

"There is something wrong then with you, Ellie," he said, gently.

"How has it been through the week? If you can do day after day pass without remembering your best Friend, it may be that when you feel the want you will not readily find Him. How is it daily, Ellie? is seeking His face your first concern? do you give a sufficient time faithfully to your Bible and prayer?"

Ellen shook her head; no words were possible. He took up his walk again. The silence had lasted a length of time, and he was still walking, when Ellen came to his side and laid her hand on his arm.

"Have you settled that question with your conscience, Ellie?"

She weepingly answered, "Yes." They walked a few turns up and down.

"Will you promise me, Ellie, that every day when it shall be possible, you will give an hour *at least* to this business? - whatever else may be done or undone?"

Ellen promised; and then with her hand in his they continued their walk through the room till Mr. Humphreys and the servants came in. Her brother's prayer that night Ellen never forgot.

No more was said at that time about her going to Ventnor. But a week or two after, John smilingly told her to get all her private affairs arranged, and to let her friends know they need not expect to see her the next Sunday, for that he was going to take her with him. As she saw he had made up his mind, Ellen said nothing in the way of objecting; and now that the decision was taken from her was really very glad to go. She arranged everything, as he had said; and was ready Saturday morning to set off with a very light heart.

They went in the sleigh. In a happy quiet mood of mind, Ellen enjoyed everything exceedingly. She had not been to Ventnor for several months; the change of scene was very grateful.

Ellen was received as a precious lending that must be taken the greatest care of and enjoyed as much as possible while one has it. Mrs. Marshman and Mrs. Chauncey treated her as if she had been their own child. Ellen Chauncey overwhelmed her with joyful caresses, and could scarcely let her out of her arms by night or by day. She was more than ever Mr. Marshman's pet; but, indeed, she was well petted by all the family. It was a very happy visit.

Even Sunday left nothing to wish for. To her great joy not only Mrs. Chauncey went with her in the morning to hear her brother (for his church was not the one the family attended), but the carriage was ordered in the afternoon also; and Mrs. Chauncey and her

daughter and Miss Sophia went with her again. When they returned, Miss Sophia, who had taken a very great fancy to her, brought her into her own room and made her lie down with her upon the bed, though Ellen insisted she was not tired.

"Well, you ought to be, if you are not," said the lady. "Pam. Keep away, Ellen Chauncey, you can't be anywhere without talking. You can live without Ellen for half an hour, can't ye? Leave us a little while in quiet."

Ellen for her part was quite willing to be quiet. But Miss Sophia was not sleepy, and it soon appeared, had no intention of being silent herself.

"Well, how do you like your brother in the pulpit?" she began.

"I like him anywhere, ma'am," said Ellen, with a very unequivocal smile.

"How is Mr. Humphreys, Ellen?"

"I can hardly tell; he is so silent."

"Mr. Humphreys was not always as silent and reserved as he is now; I remember him when he was different; though I don't think he ever was much like his son. Did you ever hear about it?"

"About what, ma'am?"

"About coming to this country? what brought him to Carra-carra?"

"No, ma'am."

"My father, you see, had come out long before, but the two families had been always very intimate in England, and it was kept up after he came away. He was a particular friend of an elder brother of Mr. Humphreys; his estate and my grandfather's lay very near each other; and besides, there were other things that drew them to each other; he married my aunt, for one. My father made several journeys back and forth in the course of years, and so kept up his attachment to the whole family, you know; and he became very desirous to get Mr. Humphreys over here—this Mr. Humphreys, you know. He was the younger brother—younger brothers in England generally have little or nothing: but you don't know anything about that, Ellen. He hadn't anything then but his living, and that was a small one; he had some property left him though, just before he came to America."

"But, Miss Sophia,"—Ellen hesitated—"are you sure they would like I should hear all this?"

"Why, yes, child!—of course they would; everybody knows it. Some things made Mr. Humphreys as willing to leave England about that time as my father was to have him. An excellent situation was offered him in one of the best institutions here, and he came out.

Alice and I were just like sisters always from that time. We lived near together, and saw each other every day, and our two families were just like one. But they were liked by everybody. Miss Humphreys was a very fine person—very. Oh, very! I never saw any woman I admired more. Her death almost killed her husband; and I think Alice. I don't know, there isn't the least sign of delicate health about Mr. Humphreys nor Mr. John, not the slightest—nor about Miss Humphreys either. She was a very fine woman!"

"How long ago did she die?" said Ellen.

"Seven years ago. Mr. John had been left in England till a little before Mr. Humphreys was never the same after that. He wouldn't hold his professorship any longer, he couldn't be useful; he just went and buried himself at Curia curia. That was a little after we came here."

How much all this interested Ellen! She was glad, however, when Miss Sophia seemed to have talked herself out, for she wanted very much to think over John's sermon. And as Miss Sophia happily fell into a doze soon after, she had a long quiet time for it, till it grew dark, and Ellen Chumley, whose impatience could hold no longer, came to seek her.

The next morning, not sorrowfully, Ellen entered the sleigh again, and they set off homewards.

Towards the end of the winter Mr. Humphreys began to propose that his son should visit England and Scotland during the following summer. He wished high to see his family and to know his native country, as well as some of the most distinguished men and institutions in both kingdoms. Mr. George Mushman also urged upon him some business in which he thought he could be eminently useful. But Mr. John declined both propositions, still thinking he had more important duties at home. His only cloud that rose above Ellen's horizon scattered away.

One evening, it was a Monday, in the twilight, John was as usual pacing up and down the floor.

"How pleasant this moonlight is!" said Ellen.

"What makes it pleasant?"

"What makes it pleasant? I don't know. I never thought of such a thing. It is made to be pleasant. I can't tell why, can anybody?"

"The sun's love light for many reasons, but all kinds of light are not equally agreeable. What makes the peculiar charm of those long streams of pale light across the floor, and the shadowy brightness without?"

"You must tell," said Ellen, "I cannot."

"You know we enjoy anything much more by contrast ; I think that is one reason. Night is the reign of darkness which we do not love ; and here is light struggling with the darkness, not enough to overcome it entirely, but yet banishing it to nooks, and corners, and distant parts, by the side of which it shows itself in contrasted beauty. Our eyes bless the unwonted victory."

"Yes, we only have moonlight nights once in awhile."

"But that is only one reason out of many, and not the greatest. It is a very refined pleasure, and to resolve it into its elements is something like trying to divide one of these same white rays of light into the many various coloured ones that go to form it ; and not by any means so easy a task."

"Then it was no wonder I couldn't answer," said Ellen.

"No ; you are hardly a full-grown philosopher yet, Ellie."

"The moonlight is so calm and quiet," Ellen observed, admiringly.

"And why is it calm and quiet ? I must have an answer to that."

"Because we are generally calm and quiet at such times," Ellen ventured after a little thought.

"Precisely ! we and the world. • And association has given the moon herself the same character. Besides that, her mild sober light is not fitted for the purposes of active employment, and therefore the more graciously invites us to the pleasure of thought and fancy."

"I am loving it more and more, the more you talk about it," said Ellen.

"And there you have touched another reason, Ellie, for the pleasure we have, not only in moonlight, but in most other things. When two things have been in the mind together, and made any impression, the mind *associates* them ; and you cannot see or think of the one without bringing back the remembrance or the feeling of the other. If we have enjoyed the moonlight in pleasant scenes, in happy hours, with friends that we loved,—though the sight of it may not always make us directly remember them, it yet brings with it a waft from the feeling of the old times, sweet as long life lasts !"

"And sorrowful things may be associated too ?" said Ellen.

"Yes, and sorrowful things. • But this power of association is the cause of half the pleasure we enjoy. There is a tune my mother used to sing—I cannot hear it now without being carried swiftly back to my boyish days, to the very spirit of the time ; I *feel* myself spring over the greensward as I did then."

"Oh, I know that is true," said Ellen. "The camellia, the white camellia, you know, I like it so much ever since what you said about it one day. I never see it without thinking of it; and it would not seem half so beautiful but for that."

"What did I say about it?"

"Don't you remember? you said it was like what you ought to be, and what you should be if you ever reached heaven; and you repeated that verse in the Revelation about those that have not defiled their garments." I always think of it. It seems to give me a lesson."

"How eloquent of beautiful lessons all nature would be to us," said John, musingly, "if we had but the eye and ear to take them in."

"And in that way you would heap associations upon associations?"

"Yes; till our storehouse of pleasure was very full."

"You do that now," said Ellen. "I wish you would teach me."

"I have read precious things sometimes in the bunches of flowers you are so fond of, Ellie. Can't you?"

"I don't know. I only think of themselves, except sometimes they make me think of Alice."

"You shall bring me some to-morrow, Ellie, and we will read them together."

"There are plenty over there now," said Ellen, looking towards the little flower-stand, which was as full and as flourishing as ever, "but we can't see them well by this light."

"A bunch of flowers seems to bring me very near the hand that made them. They are the work of His fingers; and I cannot consider them without being joyfully assured of the glory and loveliness of their Creator. It is written as plainly to me in their delicate painting and sweet breath, and curious structure, as in the very pages of the Bible; though without the Bible I could not read the flowers."

"I never thought much of that," said Ellen. "And then you find particular lessons in particular flowers?"

"Sometimes."

"Oh, come here!" said Ellen, pulling him towards the flower-stand, "and tell me what this daphne is like—you need not see that, only smell it, that's enough; do, John, and tell me what it is like!"

"It is like the fragrance that Christian society sometimes leaves upon the spirit; when it is just what it ought to be."

"My Mr. Marshman!" exclaimed Ellen.

John smiled again. "I thought of him, Ellie."

Ellen was silent a moment from pleasure.

"Well, I have got an association now with the daphne!" she said,

joyously ; and presently added, sighing, " How much you see in everything that I do not see at all."

"Time, Ellic," said John; "there must be time for that. It will come. Time is cried out upon as a great thief; it is people's own fault. Use him but well, and you will get from his hand more than he will ever take from you."

Ellen's thoughts travelled on a little way from this speech, and then came a sigh, of some burden, as it seemed; and her face was softly laid against the arm she held. Her hand was fondly taken in his; and as they slowly paced up and down, he went on in low tones of kindness and cheerfulness with his pleasant talk, till she was too happy in the present to be anxious about the future; looked up again and brightly into his face, and questions and answers came as gaily as

CHAPTER XLVI.

SOMETHING TURNS UP.

THE rest of the winter, or rather the early part of the spring passed happily away. As if to verify Mr. Van Brunt's remark, that "something is always happening most years," about the middle of May there came letters that after all determined John's going abroad. The sudden death of two relatives, one after the other, had left the family estate to Mr. Humphreys; it required the personal attendance either of himself or his son; he could not, therefore his son must go. And on the other side of the Atlantic, Mr. John thought it best his going should fulfil all the ends for which both Mr. Humphreys and Mr. Marshman had desired it; this would occasion his stay to be prolonged to at least a year. And he must set off without delay.

The family at Ventnor were exceedingly desirous that Ellen should make one of them during all the time John should be gone; they urged it with every possible argument. Ellen said little, but he knew she did not wish it; and finally compounded the matter by arranging that she should stay at the parsonage through the summer, and spend the winter at Ventnor.

How the next days passed Ellen hardly knew; they were unspeakably long.

Not a week after, one morning Nancy Vawse appeared.

"Well, I declare, Ellen!" said she, —her wandering eye ~~was~~ upon everything but Ellen herself,—"ain't you as fine as a fiddle? I guess you never touch your fingers to a dish-cloth or a floor-cloth nowadays, do you?"

"No," said Ellen, "I have other things to do. But why haven't you been to see me before?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Nancy. "What do you think I have come for to-day, Ellen?"

"For anything but to see me?"

Nancy nodded very decisively.

"What have you got tucked up in your apron there?"

"Ah! that's the very thing," said Nancy. "What *have* I got, sure enough?"

"Well, I can't tell through your apron," said Ellen, smiling.

"And I can't tell either; that's more, ain't it. Now, listen, and I'll tell you where I got it, and then you may find out what it is, for I don't know. Promise me you won't tell anybody."

"I don't like to promise that, Nancy."

"Why?"

"Because it might be something I ought to tell somebody about."

"But it ain't."

"Well, I won't speak of it, certainly, Nancy, unless I think I ought; can't you trust me?"

"I wouldn't give two straws for anybody else's say so," said Nancy "but I'll trust you! It don't look like anything, does it?"

"Why, no," said Ellen, laughing; "you hold your apron so loose that I cannot see anything."

"Well, now listen. You know I've been helping down at your aunt's,—did you?"

"No."

"Well, I have, these six weeks. You never see anything go on quieter than they do, Ellen. I declare it's fun. Miss Fortune never was so good in her days. I don't mean she ain't as ugly as ever, you know, but she has to keep it in. All I have to do if I think anything is going wrong, I just let her think I am going to speak to *him* about it; only I have to do it very cunning for fear she should guess what I am up to; and the next thing I know it's all straight. He *is* about the coolest shayer," said Nancy, "I ever did see. The way he walks through her notions once in a while—not very often, mind you, but when he takes a fancy,—it's fun to see! Oh, I can get along there, first-rate now. You'd have a royal time, Ellen."

"Well, Nancy—your story?"

"Don't you be in a hurry! I am going to take my time. Well, I've been there this six weeks; doing all sorts of things, you know, taking your place, Ellen; don't you wish you was back in it? Well, a couple of weeks since, Mrs. Van took it into her head she would have up the waggon and go to Thirwall to get herself some things; a queer start for her; but at any rate Mr. Van Brunt brought up the waggon, and in she got and off they went. Now *she meant*, you must know, that I should be fast in the cellar-kitchen all the while she was gone, and she thought she had given me enough to keep me busy there; but I was up to her! I was as spry as a cricket, and flew round, and got things put up; and then I thought I'd have some fun. What do you think I did? Mrs. Montgomery was quietly sitting in the chimney-corner, and I had the whole house to myself."

"Well, go on," said Ellen.

"What do you think I did, when I had done up all my chores?—where do you think I found this, eh? *you'll* never guess."

"How can I tell? I don't know."

"If it was anybody else," said Nancy, "I'd ha' seen 'em shot afore I'd ha' done it, or told of it either; but you ain't like anybody else. Look here!" said she, tapping her apron gently with one finger and slowly marking off each word,—"this—came out of—your—*aunt's* box—in—the closet upstairs—in—her room."

"Nancy!"

"Ay, Nancy! there it is. Now you look! 'Twon't alter it, Ellen; that's where it was, if you look till tea time."

"But how came you there?"

"'Cause I wanted to amuse myself, I tell you. Partly to please myself, and partly because Mrs. Van would be so mad if she knew it."

"Oh, Nancy!"

"Well, I don't say it was right, but anyhow I did it."

"You had better put it right back again, Nancy, the first time you have a chance."

"Put it back again! I'll give it to you, and then *you* may put it back again, if you have a mind. I should like to see you! Why you don't know what I found."

"Well, what did you find?"

"The box was chuck full of all sorts of things, and I had a mind to see what was in it, so I pulled 'em out one after the other till I got to the bottom. At the very bottom was some letters and papers, and there the first thing I see was, 'Miss Ellen Montgomery.'"

"Oh, Nancy!" screamed Ellen, "a letter for me?"

"Hush!—and sit down, will you!—yes, a whole package of letters for you. Well, thought I, Mrs. Van has no right to that anyhow, and she ain't a-going to take the care of it any more; so I just took it up and put it in the bosom of my frock while I looked to see if there was any more for you, but there warn't. There it is!"

And she tossed the package into Ellen's lap. Ellen's head swam.

"Well, good-bye!" said Nancy, rising; "I may go now, I suppose, and no thanks to me."

"Yes, I do—I do thank you very much, Nancy," cried Ellen, starting up and taking her by the hand. "I do thank you, though it wasn't right; but, oh, how could she! how could she?"

"Dear me!" said Nancy; "to ask that of Mrs. Van! she could do anything. *Why* she did it, ain't so easy to tell."

Ellen, bewildered, scarcely knew, only *felt*, that Nancy had gone. The outer cover of her package, the seal of which was broken, contained three letters; two addressed to Ellen, in her father's hand, the third to another person. The seals of these had not been broken. The first that Ellen opened she saw was all in the same hand with the direction; she threw it down and eagerly tried the other. And, yes! there was indeed the beloved character of which she never thought to have seen another specimen. Ellen's heart swelled with many feelings; thankfulness, tenderness, joy, and sorrow, past and present; *that* letter was not thrown down, but grasped, while tears fell much too fast for eyes to do their work. It was long before she could get far in the letter. But when she had fairly begun it, she went on swiftly, and almost breathlessly, to the end:—

"MY DEAR, DEAR LITTLE ELLEN,

"I am scarcely able—but I must write to you once more. *Once* more, daughter, for it is not permitted me to see your face again in this world. I look to see it, my dear child, where it will be fairer than ever here it seemed, even to me. I shall die in this hope and expectation. Ellen, remember it. Your last letters have greatly encouraged and rejoiced me. I am comforted, and can leave you quietly in that hand that has led me and I believe is leading you. God bless you, my child!

"Ellen, I have another living, and she wishes to receive you as her own when I am gone. It is best you should know at once why I never spoke to you of her. After your Aunt Bessy married and went to New York, it displeased and grieved my mother greatly that I, too,

who had always been her favourite child, should leave her for an American home. And when I persisted, in spite of all that entreaties and authority could urge, she said she forgave me for destroying all her prospects of happiness, but that after I should be married and gone she should consider me as lost to her entirely, and so I must consider myself. She never wrote to me, and I never wrote to her after I reached America. She was dead to me. I do not say that I did not deserve it.

"But I have written to her lately and she has written to me. She permits me to die in the joy of being entirely forgiven and in the further joy of knowing that the only source of care I had left is done away. She will take you to her heart, to the place I once filled, and I believe fill yet. She longs to have you, and to have you as entirely her own, in all respects; and to this, in consideration of the wandering life your father leads, and will lead, I am willing and he is willing to agree. It is arranged so. The old happy home of my childhood will be your my Ellen. It joys me to think of it. Your father will write to your aunt and to you on the subject, and furnish you with funds. It is our desire that you should take advantage of the very first opportunity of proper persons going to Scotland who will be willing to take charge of you. Your dear friends, Mr. and Miss Humphreys, will, I dare say, help you in this.

"To them I could say much, if I had strength. But words are little. If blessings and prayers from a full heart are worth anything, they are the richer. My love and gratitude to them cannot--"

The writer had failed here; and what there was of the letter had evidently been written at different times. Captain Montgomery's was to the same purpose. He directed Ellen to embrace the first opportunity of suitable guardians, to cross the Atlantic and repair to No. 22, George Street, Edinburgh; and that Miss Fortune would give her the money she would need, which he had written to her to do, and that the accompanying letter Ellen was to carry with her and deliver to Mrs. Lindsay, her grandmother.

Ellen felt as if her head would split. She took up that letter, gazed at the strange name and direction which had taken such new and startling interest for her, wondered over the thought of what she was ordered to do with it, marvelled what sort of fingers they were which would open it, or whether it would ever be opened; and finally, in a perfect maze, unable to read, think, or even weep, she carried her package of letters into her room, the room that had been Alice's, laid herself on the bed, and then beside her, and fell into a deep sleep.

She woke up towards evening with the pressure of a mountain weight upon her mind. Her thoughts and feelings were a maze still; and not Mr. Humphreys himself could be more grave and abstracted than poor Ellen was that night. So many points were to be settled,—so many questions answered to herself,—it was a good while before Ellen could disentangle them, and know what she did think and feel, and what she would do.

She very soon found out her own mind upon one subject;—she would be exceedingly sorry to be obliged to obey the directions in the letters. But must she obey them?

Why had Miss Fortune kept back the letters? At the time of their being sent, Captain Montgomery's movements were extremely uncertain; and in obedience to the earnest request of his wife, he directed that without waiting for his own return Ellen should immediately set out for Scotland. Part of the money for her expenses he sent; the rest he desired his sister to furnish, promising to make all straight when he should come home. But it happened that he was already this lady's debtor in a small amount, which Miss Fortune had serious doubts of ever being repaid; she instantly determined that if she had once been a fool in lending him money, she would not a second time in adding to the sum; if he wanted to send his daughter on a wild-goose-chase after great relations, he might come home himself and see to it; it was none of her business. Quietly taking the remittance to refund his own owing, she, of course, threw the letters into her box, as the delivery of them would expose the whole transaction. There they lay till Nancy found them.

Early next morning after breakfast Ellen came into the kitchen, and begged Margery to ask Thomas to bring the Brownie to the door. She had decided to consult Mrs. Vawse on the subject.

Soon she was at Mrs. Vawse's; and finding her alone, Ellen had soon spread out all her difficulties before her, and given her the letters to read. Mrs. Vawse readily promised to speak on the subject to no one without Ellen's leave: her suspicions fell upon Mr. Van Brunt, not her granddaughter. She heard all the story, and read the letters before making any remark.

"Now, dear Mrs. Vawse," said Ellen anxiously, when the last one was folded up and laid on the table, "what do you think?"

"I think, my child, you must go," said the old lady steadily.

Ellen looked keenly, as if to find some other answer in her face; her own changing more and more, till she sunk it in her hands.

"Cela vous donne beaucoup de chagrin, je le vois bien," said the old lady. (Their conversations were always in Mrs. Vawse's tongue.)

"But," said Ellen presently, lifting her head again (there were no tears), "I cannot go without money."

"There is no difficulty about money. Show your letters to Mr. Humphreys."

"Oh, I cannot!" said Ellen, covering her face again.

"Will you let me do it? I will speak to him if you permit me."

"But what use? I ought not to give me the money, Mrs. Vawse. It would not be right; and to show him the letters would be like a kicking him for it. Oh, I can't bear to do that!"

"He would give it you, Ellen, with the greatest pleasure."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Vawse," said Ellen, bursting into tears, "he would never be pleased to send me away from him! I know—I know—he would miss me. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Not *that*, my dear Ellen," said the old lady, coming to her and gently stroking her head with both hands. "You must do what is *right*; and you know it cannot be but that will be best and happiest for you in the end."

"No, I wish—I wish," exclaimed Ellen from the bottom of her heart, "those letters had never been found!"

"Nay, Ellen, *that* is not right."

"But I promised Alice, Mrs. Vawse; ought I to go away and leave him? Oh, Mrs. Vawse, it is very hard! *Ought I?*"

"Your father and your mother have said it, my child."

"But they never would have said it if they had known!"

"But they did not know, Ellen; and here it is."

"There is one thing!" said Ellen, "I don't know of anybody going to Scotland, and I am not likely to; and if I only do not before autumn, that is not a good time to go, and then comes winter."

"My dear Ellen," said Mrs. Vawse sorrowfully, "I must drive you from your last hope. Don't you know that Mrs. Gillespie is going abroad with all her family?—next month I think."

Ellen grew pale for a minute, and sat holding bitter counsel with her own heart. Mrs. Vawse hardly knew what to say next.

"You need not feel uneasy about your journeying expenses," she remarked after a pause; "you can easily repay them, if you wish, when you reach your friends in Scotland."

"I shan't stay there, Mrs. Vawse, if I go! I shall go, I suppose, if I must; but do you think anything will keep me there? Never!"

"You will stay for the same reason that you go for, Ellen; to do your duty."

"Yes, till I am old enough to choose for myself, Mrs. Vawse, and then I shall come back; it they will let me."

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?"

"Mr. Humphreys and Mr. John."

"My dear Ellen," said the old lady kindly, "be satisfied with doing your duty now; leave the future. While you follow Him, God will be your friend; is not that enough? and all things shall work for your good. You do not know what you will wish when the time comes you speak of. You do not know what new friends you may find to love."

Ellen had in her own heart the warrant for what she had said and what she saw by her smile Mrs. Vawse doubted; but she disdained to assert what she could bring nothing to prove. She took a sorrowful leave of her old friend and returned home.

After dinner, when Mr. Humphreys was about going back to his study, Ellen timidly stopped him and gave him her letters, and asked him to look at them some time when he had leisure. She told him also where they were found and how long they had lain there, and that Mrs. Vawse had said she ought to show them to him.

She guessed he would read them at once, and she waited with a beating heart. In a little while she heard his step coming back along the hall. He came and sat down by her on the sofa and took her hand.

"What is your wish in this matter, my child?" he said gravely and cheerfully.

Ellen's look answered that.

"I will do whatever you say I must, sir," she said faintly.

"I dare not ask myself what I would wish, Ellen; the matter is taken out of our hands. You must do your parents' will, my child. I will try to hope that you will gain more than I lose. As the Lord pleases! If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

"Mrs. Gillespie," he said after a pause, "is about going to England; I know not how soon. It will be best for you to see her at once and make all arrangements that may be necessary. I will go with you to-morrow to Ventnor, if the day be a good one."

He drew her close within his arms for a moment, kissed her forehead, Ellen felt it was sadly, and went away. It was well she did not hear him sigh as he went back along the hall; it was well she did not see the face of more settled gravity with which he sat down to his writing; she had enough of her own.

They went to Ventnor. Mrs. Gillespie with great pleasure under-

took the charge of her, and promised to deliver her safely to her friends in Scotland. It was arranged that she should go back to Thirlwall to make her adieus; and that in a week or two a carriage should be sent to bring her to Ventnor, where her preparations for the journey should be made, and whence the whole party should set off.

It was not forgotten that the lapse of three years since the date of the letters left some uncertainty as to the present state of affairs among Ellen's friends in Scotland; but this doubt was not thought sufficient to justify her letting pass so excellent an opportunity of making the journey. Especially as Captain Montgomery's letter spoke of an *uncle*, to whom, equally with her grandmother, Ellen was to be consigned. In case circumstances would permit it, Mrs. Gillespie engaged to keep Ellen with her, and bring her home to America when she returned.

And in little more than a month they were gone: adieus and preparations and all were over. Ellen's parting with Mrs. Vawse was very tender and very sad. With Mr. Van Brunt, extremely and gratefully affectionate on both sides; with her aunt constrained and brief; with Margery very sorrowful indeed. The old people at Carra carra were taken leave of; the Brownie too, with great difficulty. And Nancy.

"I'm really sorry you are going, Ellen," said she; "you're the only soul in town I care about. I wish I'd thrown them letters in the fire after all! Who'd ha' thought it!"

Ellen could not help in her heart echoing the wish.

"I'm really sorry, Ellen," she repeated. "Ain't there something I can do for you when you are gone?"

"Oh yes, dear Nancy," said Ellen, weeping, "if you would only take care of your dear grandmother. She is left alone now. If you would only take care of her, and read your Bible, and be good, Nancy. Oh, Nancy, Nancy! do, do!"

They kissed each other, and Nancy went away fairly crying.

Mrs. Mashman's own woman, a steady, excellent person, had come in the carriage for Ellen. And the next morning early after breakfast, when everything else was ready, she went into Mr. Humphreys' study to bid the last dreaded good-bye. She thought her obedience was costing her dear.

It was nearly a silent parting. He held her a long time in his arms; and there Ellen bitterly thought her place ought to be. "What have I to do to seek new relations?" she said to herself. But she was speechless, till gently relaxing his hold he tenderly smoothed back her disordered hair, and kissing her, said a very few grave words of

blessing and counsel. Ellen gathered all her strength together then, for she had something that *must* be spoken.

"Sir," said she, falling on her knees and looking up in his face, "this don't alter—you do not take back what you said, do you?"

"What that I said, my child?"

"That," said Ellen, hiding her face in her hands on his knee, and scarce able to speak with great effort, "that which you said when I first came—that which you said about —"

"About what, my dear child?"

"My going away don't change anything, does it, sir? Mayn't I come back, if ever I can?"

He raised her up and drew her close to his bosom again.

"My dear little daughter," said he, "you cannot be so glad to come back as my arms and my heart will be to receive you. I scarce dare hope to see that day, but all in this house is yours, dear Ellen, as well when in Scotland as here. I take back nothing, my daughter. Nothing is changed."

A word or two more of affection and blessing, which Ellen was utterly unable to answer in any way, and she went to the carriage; with one drop of cordial in her heart, that she fed upon a long while. "He called me his daughter! he never said that before since Alice died! Oh, so I will be as long as I live, if I find fifty new relations. But what good will a daughter three thousand miles off do him?"

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WIDE WORLD GROWS WIDER.

THE voyage was peaceful and prosperous; in due time the whole party found themselves safe in London. Ever since they set out Ellen had been constantly gaining on Mrs. Gillespie's good-will, the major hardly saw her but she had something to say about that "best-bred child in the world." "Best-hearted too, I think," said the major, and even Mrs. Gillespie owned that there was something more than good breeding in Ellen's politeness.

Mrs. Gillespie told her husband she should be rejoiced if it turned out that they might keep Ellen with them, and carry her back to America; she only wished it were not for Mr. Humphreys but herself. As their destination was not now Scotland but Paris, it was proposed to write to Ellen's friends to ascertain whether any change had

current, or whether they still wished to receive her. This, however, was rendered unnecessary. They were scarcely established in their hotel, when a gentleman from Edinburgh, an intimate friend of the Ventnor family, and whom Ellen herself had more than once met there, came to see them. Mrs Gillespie bethought herself to make enquiries of him.

"Do you happen to know a family of Lindsay's in George's Street, Mr Dundas?"

"Lindsay's? yes, perfectly well. Do you know them?"

"No, but I am very much interested in one of the family. Is the old lady living?"

"Yes, certainly. Not very old either, not above sixty or sixty-five and as hale and alert as at forty. A very fine old lady."

"A very large family?"

"Oh, no, Mr Lindsay is a widower with no children, and there is a widowed daughter lately come home. I advise Keigh, that's all."

"Mr Lindsay—that is the son?"

"Yes. You would like them. They are excellent people, excellent family—wealthy but rural country-seat on the south bank of the Tyne, some miles out of Edinburgh. I was down there two weeks ago,—entertain most hospitably and agreeably, two things that do not always go together. You meet a pleasanter circle nowhere than at Lindsay's."

"And that is the whole family?" said Mrs Gillespie.

"That is all. There were two daughters married to America some dozen or so years ago. Mrs Lindsay took it very hard, I believe, but she bore up, and bears up now as if misfortune had never crossed her path; though the death of Mr Lindsay's wife and son was another great blow. I don't believe there is a grey hair on her head at this moment. There is some peculiarity about them perhaps, some pride too; but that is an amiable weakness, he added laughing, as he rose to go; "Mrs Gillespie, I am sure, will not find fault with them for it."

"That's an insinuation, Mr Dundas; but look here, what I am bringing to Mrs. Lindsay, in the shape of a granddaughter."

"What, my old acquaintance, Ellen? Is it possible? My dear madam, if you had such a treasure for sale, they would pour half their fortune into your lap to purchase it, and the other half at her feet."

"Ah, Ellen, my dear," said Mrs Gillespie, when he was gone, "we shall never have you back in America again. I give up all hopes of it. Why do you look so solemn, my love? You are a strange child; most girls would be delighted at such a prospect opening before them."

"You forget what I leave, Mrs. Gillespie."

"So will you, my love, in a few days; though I love you for remembering so well those that have been kind to you. But you don't realise yet what is before you."

Leaving their children at a relation's house, Major and Mrs. Gillespie accompanied her to the north. They travelled post, and arriving in the evening at Edinburgh, put up at a hotel in Prince's Street. It was agreed that Ellen should not seek her new home till the morrow; she should eat one more supper and breakfast with her old friends, and have a night's rest first. She was very glad of it.

In a very quiet mind, but a little flustered and anxious, she set out in the post-chaise the next morning with her kind friends to No. — George's Street. It was their intention, after leaving her, to go straight on to England. They were in a hurry to be there; and Mrs. Gillespie judged that the presence of a stranger at the meeting between Ellen and her new relations would be desired by none of the parties. But when they reached the house they found the family were not at home; they were in the country at their place on the Tyne. The direction was obtained, and the horses' heads turned that way. After a drive of some length they arrived at the place.

It was beautifully situated; and through well-kept grounds they drove up to a large, rather old-fashioned, substantial-looking house. "The ladies were at home"; and that ascertained, Ellen took a kind leave of Mrs. Gillespie, shook hands with the major at the door, and was left alone for the second time in her life to make her acquaintance with new and untried friends. She stood for one second looking after the retreating carriage,—one swift thought went to her adopted father and brother far away, one to her Friend in heaven,—and Ellen quietly turned to the servant and asked for Mrs. Lindsay.

She was shown into a large room where nobody was, and sat down with a beating heart while the servant went upstairs; looking with a strange feeling upon what was to be her future home. The house was handsome, comfortably, luxuriously furnished; but without any attempt at display. Things rather old-fashioned than otherwise; plain, even homely in some instances; yet evidently there was no sparing of money in any line of use or comfort; nor were reading and writing, painting and music, strangers there. Unconsciously acting upon her brother's principle of judging of people from their works, Ellen from what she saw gathered around her, formed a favourable opinion of her relations; without thinking of it, for, indeed, she was thinking of something else.

A lady presently entered, and said that Mrs. Lindsay was not very well. Seeing Ellen's very hesitating look, she added, "Shall I carry her any message for you?" Ellen silently gave her her father's letter, with which the lady left the room.

In a minute or two she returned and said her mother would see Ellen upstairs, and asked her to come with her. This, then, must be Lady Keith! but no sign of recognition? Ellen wondered, as her trembling feet carried her upstairs, and to the door of a room where the lady motioned her to enter; she did not follow herself.

A large pleasant dressing-room; but Ellen saw nothing but the dignified figure and searching glance of a lady in black, standing in the middle of the floor. At the look which instantly followed her entering, however, Ellen sprang forward, and was received in arms that folded her as fondly and as closely as ever those of her own mother had done. Without releasing them from their clasp, Mrs. Lindsay presently sat down; and placing Ellen on her lap, and for a long time without speaking a word, she overwhelmed her with caresses, caresses often interrupted with passionate bursts of tears. Ellen herself cried heartily for company, though Mrs. Lindsay little guessed why. Along with the joy and tenderness arising from the finding a relation that so much loved and valued her, and along with the sympathy that entered into Mrs. Lindsay's thoughts, there mixed other feelings. She began to know, as it by instinct, what kind of a person her grandmother was. The clasp of the arm, that were about her said as plainly as possible, "I will never let you go!" Ellen felt it; she did not know in her confusion whether she was most glad or most sorry, and this uncertainty mightily helped the flow of her tears.

When this scene had lasted some time Mrs. Lindsay took the fair little face in both her hands, looked at it and pressed it to her own, as indeed something most dearly prized and valued. Then saying, "I must lie down; come in here, love," she led her into the next room, locked the door, made Ellen stretch herself on the bed; and placing herself beside her, drew her close to her bosom again, murmuring, "My own child, my precious child, my Ellen, my darling, why did you stay away so long from me? tell me!"

It was necessary to tell; and this could not be done without revealing Miss Fortune's disgraceful conduct. Ellen was sorry for that; she knew her mother's American match had been unpopular with her friends; and now what notions this must give them of one at least of the near connexions to whom it had introduced her. She winced under what might be her grandmother's thoughts. Mrs. Lindsay,

heard her in absolute silence, and made no comment; and at the end again kissed her lips and cheeks, embracing her, Ellen felt as a recovered treasure that would not be parted with. She was not satisfied till she had drawn Ellen's head fairly to rest on her breast, and then her caressing hand often touched her cheek, or smoothed back her hair, softly now and then asking questions about her voyage and journey, till exhausted from excitement more than fatigue Ellen fell asleep.

Her uncle she did not see until late in the day, when he came home. The evening was extremely fair, and having obtained permission, Ellen wandered out into the shrubbery; glad to be alone, and glad for a moment to exchange new faces for old; the flowers were old friends to her, and never had looked more friendly than then. New and old both were there. Ellen went on softly from flower-bed to flower-bed, soothed and rested, stopping here to smell one, or there to gaze at some old favourite or new beauty, thinking curious thoughts of the past and the future, and through it all taking a quiet lesson from the flowers; when a servant came after her with a request from Mrs. Lindsay that she would return to the house. Ellen hurried in; she guessed for what, and was sure as soon as she opened the door and saw the figure of a gentleman sitting before Mrs. Lindsay. Ellen remembered well she was sent to her uncle as well as her grandmother, and she came forward with a beating heart to Mrs. Lindsay's outstretched hand, which presented her to this other ruler of her destiny. He was very different from Lady Keith, her anxious glance saw that at once—more like his mother. A man not far from fifty years old; fine-looking and stately like her. Ellen was not left long in suspense; his look instantly softened as his mother's had done; he drew her to his arms with great affection, and, evidently with very great pleasure; then held her off for a moment while he looked at her changing colour and downcast eye, and folded her close in his arms again, from which he seemed hardly willing to let her go, whispering as he kissed her, "You are my own child now, you are my little daughter, do you know that, Ellen? I am your father henceforth: you belong to me entirely, and I belong to you; my own little daughter!"

Lady Keith, it may be, had less heart to give than her mother and brother, but pride took up the matter instead; and according to her measure, Ellen held with her the same place she held with Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay; being the great delight and darling of all three; and with all three, seemingly the great object in life.

A few days after her arrival, a week or more, she underwent one evening a kind of catechising from her aunt as to her former manner

of life; where she had been and with whom since her mother left her; what she had been doing; whether she had been to school, and how her time was spent at home, &c., &c. No comments whatever were made on her answers, but a something in her aunt's face and manner induced Ellen to make her replies as brief and to give her as little information in them as she could. She did not feel inclined to enlarge upon anything, or to go at all further than the questions obliged her; and Lady Keith ended without having more than a very general notion of Ellen's way of life for three or four years past. This conversation was repeated to her grandmother and uncle.

"To think," said the latter the next morning at breakfast—"to think that the backwoods of America should have turned us out such a little specimen of—"

"Of what, uncle?" said Ellen, laughing.

"Ah, I shall not tell you that," said he.

"But it is extraordinary," said Lady Keith, "how after living among a parcel of thick-headed and thicker-tongued Yankees she should come out and speak pure English in a clear voice; it is an enigma to me."

"Take care, Catherine," said Mr. Lindsay, laughing, "you are touching Ellen's nationality; look here," said he, drawing his fingers down her cheek.

"She must learn to have no nationality but yours," said Lady Keith.

"Have you never been to school, Ellen?"

"No, sir; except for a little while, more than three years ago."

"Would you like it?"

"I would a great deal rather study at home, sir, if you will let me."

"What do you know now?"

"Oh, I can't tell, sir," said Ellen; "I don't know anything very well, unless—"

"Unless what?" said her uncle laughing; "come now for your accomplishments."

"I had rather not say what I was going to; please don't ask me."

"Yes, yes," said he; "I shan't let you off. Unless what?"

"I was going to say, unless riding," said Ellen, colouring.

"Riding! And pray how did you learn to ride? Catch a horse by the mane and mount him by the fence and canter off barebacked? was that it? eh?"

"Not exactly, sir," said Ellen laughing.

"Well, but about your other accomplishments. You do not know anything of French, I suppose?"

"Yes I do, sir."

"Where did you get that?"

"An old Swiss lady in the mountains taught me."

"Country riding and Swiss French," muttered her uncle.

"Did she teach you to speak it?"

"Yes, sir."

"One thing at least can be mended," said Mr. Lindsay. "She shall go to De Courcy's riding-school as soon as we get to Edinburgh."

"Indeed, uncle, I don't think that will be necessary."

"Who taught you to ride, Ellen?" asked Lady Keith.

"My brother."

"Humph! I fancy a few lessons will do you no harm," she remarked. Ellen coloured and was silent.

"You know nothing of music, of course?"

"I cannot play, uncle."

"Can you sing?"

"I can sing hymns."

"Sing hymns! That's the only fault I find with you, Ellen, you are too sober. I should like to see you a little more gay, like other children."

"But, uncle, I am not unhappy because I am sober."

"But I am," said he. "I do not know precisely what I shall do with you; I must do something!"

"Where did you get your English, Ellen?"

"From my brother," said Ellen, with a smile of pleasure.

Mr. Lindsay's brow rather clouded. "Whom do you mean by that?"

"The brother of the lady who was so kind to me," Ellen disliked to speak the loved names in the hearing of ears to which she knew they would be unlovely.

"How was she so kind to you?"

"Oh, sir! in everything—I cannot tell you; she was my friend when I had only one beside; she did everything for me."

"And who was the other friend? your aunt?"

"No, sir."

"This brother?"

"No, sir; that was before I knew him."

"Who then?"

"His name was Mr. Van Brunt."

"Van Brunt! Humph! And what was he?"

"He was a farmer, sir."

"A Dutch farmer, eh? how came you to have anything to do with him?"

"He managed my aunt's farm, and was a great deal in the house."

"He was! And what makes you call this other *your brother*?"

"His sister called me her sister—and that made me his."

"It seems then, you did not find a friend in your aunt, Ellen? eh?"

"I don't think she loved me much," said Ellen in a low voice.

"I am very glad we are clear of obligation on *her* score," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"Obligation! And so you had nothing else to depend on, Ellen, but this man—this Van something—this Dutchman? What did he do for you?"

"A great deal, sir;" Ellen would have said more, but a feeling in her throat stopped her.

"Now just hear that, will you?" said Lady Keith. "Just think of her in that farmhouse, with that sweeping and dusting woman and a Dutch farmer, for these three years!"

"No," said Ellen, "not all the time; this last year I have been——"

"Where, Ellen?"

"At the other house, sir."

"What house is that?"

"Where that lady and gentleman lived that were my best friends."

"Well it's all very well," said Lady Keith, "but it is past now; it is all over; you need not think of them any more."

"Oh, Aunt Keith!" said Ellen, "if you knew——" but she burst into tears.

"Come, come," said Mr. Lindsay, taking her into his arms, "I will not have that. Hush, my daughter. What is the matter, Ellen?"

"Because," sobbed Ellen, thoroughly roused, "I love them dearly! and I ought to love them with all my heart. I cannot forget them, and never shall; and I can never have better friends—never! it's impossible—oh, it's impossible!"

Mr. Lindsay said nothing at first, except to soothe her; but when she had wept herself into quietness upon his breast, he whispered—

"It is right to love these people if they were kind to you, but as your aunt says, that is past. It is not necessary to go back to it. Forget that you were American, Ellen, you belong to me; your name is not Montgomery any more, it is Lindsay; and I will not have you call me 'uncle'—I am your father; you are my own little daughter, and must do precisely what I tell you. Do you understand me?"

He would have a "yes" from her, and then added, "Go and get yourself ready, and I will take you with me to Edinburgh."

Ellen's tears had been like to burst forth again at his words ; with great effort she controlled herself and obeyed him.

"I shall do precisely what he tells me, of course," she said to herself as she went to get ready, "but there are some things he cannot command, nor I neither ; I am glad of that ! Forget, indeed !"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HOW OLD FRIENDS WERE INVITED WITH THE REGALIA.

MR. LINDSAY had some reason that morning to wish that Ellen would look merrier ; it was a very sober little face he saw by his side as the carriage rolled smoothly on with them towards Edinburgh ; almost pale in its sadness.

They drove through the streets of Edinburgh, both the Old and the New Town, in various directions ; Mr. Lindsay extremely pleased to see that Ellen was so, and much amused at the curiosity shown in her questions, which, however, were by no means as free and frequent as they might have been had John Humphreys filled her uncle's place.

"What large building is that over there ?" said Ellen.

"That ? that is Holyrood House."

"Holyrood ! I have heard of that before ; isn't that where Queen Mary's rooms are ; where Rizzio was killed ?"

"Yes ; would you like to see them ?"

"Oh, very much !"

"Drive to the Abbey. So you have read Scottish history, as well as American, Ellen ?"

"Not very much, sir, only the 'Tales of a Grandfather' yet. But what made me say that, I have read an account of Holyrood House somewhere."

"Is this very old, sir ?" asked Ellen when they arrived at the palace.

"Not very ; it has been burnt and demolished and rebuilt until nothing is left of the old Abbey of King David but the ruins of the chapel, which you shall see presently. The oldest part of the House is that we are going to see now, built by James Fifth, Mary's father, where her rooms are."

At these rooms Ellen looked with intense interest. She pored over the old furniture, the needle-work of which she was told was at least in part the work of the beautiful Queen's own fingers gazed at the

stairs in the floor of the bed chamber, said to be those of Rizzio's blood; meditated over the trap-door in the passage, by which the conspirators had come up; and finally sat down in the room and tried to realise the scene which had once been acted there.

"You are tired, this doesn't please you much," said Mr. Lindsay, presently, noticing her grave look.

"Oh, it pleases me very much," said Ellen, starting up, "I do not wonder she swore vengeance."

"Who?" said Mr. Lindsay.

"Queen Mary, sir."

"Were you thinking of her all this while? I am glad of it. I spoke to you once without getting a word. I was afraid this was not amusing enough to detain your thoughts."

"Oh yes, it was," said Ellen, "I have been trying to think about that. I like to look at old things very much."

"Perhaps you would like to see the regalia? Well, come," said he, as he read the answer in Ellen's face, "we will go, but first let us see the old chapel."

With this Ellen was wonderfully pleased, and they next visited the Crown room, where Ellen fell into another fit of grave attention; but Mr. Lindsay, taught better, did not this time mistake rapt interest for absence of mind. He answered questions and gave her several pieces of information, and let her take her own time to gaze and meditate.

"I wish Bruce's crown was here," said Ellen, after a while. "I should like to see anything that belonged to him."

"I'll take you to the field of Bannockburn some day, that belonged to him with a vengeance. It lies over yonder."

"Bannockburn! will you? and Stirling Castle! Oh, how I should like that!"

"Stirling Castle," said Mr. Lindsay, smiling at Ellen's clasped hands of delight, "what do you know of Stirling Castle?"

"From the history, you know, sir."

They drove now to his house in George's Street. Mr. Lindsay had some business to attend to, and would leave her there for an hour or two. And that their fast might not be too long unbroken, Mrs. Allen, the housekeeper, was directed to furnish them with some biscuits in the library, whither Mr. Lindsay led Ellen.

She liked the looks of it very much. Plenty of book, old looking comfortable furniture, pleasant light; all manner of etceteras around which rejoiced Ellen's heart. Mr. Lindsay noticed her pleased glances passing from one thing to another. He placed her in a deep easy chair,

took off her bonnet and threw it on the sofa, and kissing her fondly asked her if she felt at home.

"Not yet," Ellen said; but her look said it would not take long to make her do so. She sat enjoying her rest, and munching her biscuit with great appetite and satisfaction.

When biscuits were disposed of, Mr. Lindsay drew her close to his side, and encircling her fondly with his arms, said—

"I shall leave you now for an hour or two, and you must amuse yourself as you can. The bookcases are open—perhaps you can find something there; or there are prints in those portfolios; or you can go over the house and make yourself acquainted with your new home. If you want anything, ask Mrs. Allen. Does it look pleasant to you?"

"Very," said Ellen.

"You are at home here, daughter; go where you will and do what you will. I shall not leave you long. But before I go, Ellen, let me hear you call me father."

Ellen obeyed, trembling, for it seemed to her that it was to set her hand and seal to the deed of gift her father and mother had made. But there was no retreat; it was spoken; and Mr. Lindsay, folding her close in his arms, kissed her again and again.

"Never let me hear you call me anything else, Ellen. You are mine own now—my own child—my own little daughter. You shall do just what pleases me in everything, and let by-gones be by-gones. And now lie down there and rest; you are trembling from head to foot; rest and amuse yourself in any way you like till I return."

He left the room.

"I have done it now!" thought Ellen, as she sat in the corner of the sofa where Mr. Lindsay had tenderly placed her; "I have called him my father, I am bound to obey him after this. I wonder what in the world they will make me do next? What if they were to want me to do something wrong?—they might; John never did, I could not have disobeyed him, possibly; but I could them, if it was necessary, and if it is necessary, I will. I should have a dreadful time; I wonder if I could go through with it? Oh, yes, I could, if it was right; and besides would rather bear anything in the world from them than have John displeased with me; a great deal rather. But perhaps after all they will not want anything wrong of me."

Simply and heartily commending her interests to God's keeping, Ellen tried to lay aside the care of herself. She went on musing; how very different and how much greater her enjoyment would have been that day if John had been with her. Ellen found herself growing

melancholy over the comparison she was drawing ; and wisely went to the bookcases to divert her thoughts. Finding presently a history of Scotland, she took it down, resolving to refresh her memory on a subject which had gained such new and strange interest for her. Before long, however, fatigue effectually got the better of her studious thoughts ; she stretched herself on the sofa and fell asleep.

There Mr. Lindsay found her a couple of hours afterwards under the guard of the housekeeper.

"You must have had a pleasant nap," said Mr. Lindsay, after waking Ellen, "you wake up smiling. Come, make haste, I have left a friend in the carriage. Bring your book along if you want it."

It was a grave question in the family that same evening whether Ellen should be sent to school. Lady Keith was decidedly in favour of it ; her mother seemed doubtful ; Mr. Lindsay, who had a vision of the little figure lying asleep on his library sofa, thought the room had never looked so cheerful before, and had near made up his mind that she should be its constant adornment the coming winter. Lady Keith urged the school plan.

"Not a boarding-school," said Mrs. Lindsay ; "I will not hear of that."

"No, but a day-school ; it would do her a vast deal of good, I am certain ; her notions want shaking up very much. And I never saw a child of her age so much a child."

"I assure you I never saw one such a woman. She has asked me to-day, I suppose," said he smiling, "a hundred questions or less ; and I assure you there was not one foolish or vain one among them ; not one that was not sensible, and most of them singularly so."

"I never saw such a baby-face in my life," said Lady Keith, "in a child of her years."

"It is a face of uncommon intelligence," said her brother.

"It is both," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"I was struck with it the other day," said Lady Keith— "the day she slept so long upon the sofa upstairs after she was dressed ; she had been crying about something, and her eyelashes were wet still, and she had that curious grave innocent look you only see in infants ; you might have thought she was fourteen months, instead of fourteen years, old ; fourteen and a half she says she is."

"She seems to be perfectly gentle and submissive," said Mr. Lindsay.

"Yes, but don't trust too much to appearance," said his sister. "If she is not a true Lindsay after all I am mistaken. Did you see her colour one or twice this morning, when something was said that did not please her?"

"You can judge nothing from that," said Mr. Lindsay; "she colours at everything. You should have seen her to-day when I told her I would take her to Bannockburn."

"Ah! she has got the right side of you; you will be able to discern no faults in her presently."

"She has used no arts for it, sister; she is a straightforward true hussy, and that is one thing I like about her, though I was as near as possible being provoked with her once or twice to-day. There is only one thing I wish was altered;—she has her head filled with strange notions—absurd for a child of her age; I don't know what I shall do to get rid of them."

After some more conversation, it was decided that school would be the best thing for this end, and half decided that Ellen should go.

But this half-decision Mr. Lindsay found it very difficult to keep to, and circumstances soon destroyed it entirely. Company was constantly coming and going at "The Braes," and much of it of a kind that Ellen exceedingly liked to see and hear; intelligent, cultivated, well informed people, whose conversation was highly agreeable and always useful to her.

One evening Mr. Lindsay, a M. Villars, and M. Muller, a Swiss gentleman, and a noted man of science, very much at home in Mr. Lindsay's house, were carrying on, in French, a conversation in which the two foreigners took part against their host. M. Villars began with talking about Lafayette: from him they went to the American Revolution and Washington, and from them to other patriots and other republics, ancient and modern. Ellen as usual was fast by Mr. Lindsay's side, and delighted to see that he could by no means make good his ground. The conversation was very lively, and on a subject very interesting to her; for America had been always a darling theme; Scottish struggles for freedom were fresh in her mind; her attention had long ago been called to Switzerland and its history by Alice and Mrs. Vawse, and French history had formed a good part of her last winter's reading. She listened with the most eager delight, too much engrossed to notice the good-humoured glances that were every now and then given her by one of the speakers. Not Mr. Lindsay; though his hand was upon her shoulder or playing with the light curls that fell over her temples. He did not see that her face was flushed with interest, or notice the quick smile and sparkle of the eye that followed every turn in the conversation that favoured her wishes or foiled his—it was M. Muller. They came to the end, and their famous struggle for freedom against Austrian oppression.

M. Muller wished to speak of the noted battle in which that freedom was made sure, but for the moment its name had escaped him.

"Par ma foi," said M. Villars, "il m'a entièrement passé."

Mr. Lindsay could not or would not help him out. But M. Muller suddenly turned to Ellen, in whose face he thought he saw a look of intelligence, and begged of her the missing name.

"Est-ce Morgarten, monsieur?" said Ellen blushing.

"Morgarten! c'est ça!" said he with a polite, pleased bow of thanks. Mr. Lindsay was little less astonished than the Duke of Argyle when his gardener claimed to be the owner of a Latin work on mathematics.

The conversation presently took a new turn with M. Villars; and M. Muller withdrawing from it addressed himself to Ellen. He was a pleasant-looking elderly gentleman, she had never seen him before that evening.

"You know French well then?" said he, speaking to her in that tongue.

"I don't know, sir," said Ellen modestly.

"And you have heard of the Swiss mountaineers?"

"Oh, yes, sir, a great deal."

He opened his watch and showed her, in the back of it an exquisite little painting, asking her if she knew what it was.

"It is an Alpine chalet, is it not, sir?"

He was pleased, and went on, always in French, to tell Ellen that Switzerland was his country, and drawing a little aside from the other talkers, he entered into a long and to her most delightful conversation. Presently he put his hand in his pocket, and pulled out a little painting in mosaic to show her which he said had been given to him that day. It was a beautiful piece of *pietra dura* work—Mont Blanc. He assured her the mountain often looked exactly so. Ellen admired it very much. It was meant to be set for a brooch or some such thing, he said, and he asked if she would keep it and sometimes wear it, to "remember the Swiss and to do him a pleasure."

"Moi, monsieur!" said Ellen, colouring high with pleasure, "je suis bien obligée, mais, monsieur, je ne saurais vous remercier!"

He would count himself well paid, he said, with a single kiss.

"Tenez, monsieur!" said Ellen, blushing, but smiling, and tendering back the mosaic.

He laughed and bowed and begged her pardon, and said she must give it to assure him she had forgiven him.

M. Muller afterwards gratified Mr. Lindsay in a high degree by the

praises he bestowed upon his daughter, her intelligence, her manners, her modesty, and her *French*. He asked if she was to be in Edinburgh that winter, and whether she would be at school; and Mr. Lindsay declaring himself undecided on the latter point, M. Muller said he should be pleased if she had leisure, to have her come to his rooms two or three times a week to read with him. This offer, from a person of M. Muller's standing and studious habits, Mr. Lindsay justly took as both a great compliment and a great promise of advantage to Ellen. He at once and with much pleasure accepted it. So the question of school was settled.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THOUGHT IS FREE.

IN a few weeks they moved to Edinburgh, where arrangements were speedily made for giving Ellen every means of improvement that masters and mistresses, books and instruments, could afford.

The house in Georges Street was large and pleasant. To Ellen's great joy a pretty little room opening from the first landing-place of the private staircase was assigned for her special use as a study and work-room; and fitted up nicely for her with a small bookcase, a practising piano, and various etceteras. A glass door at one end of the room opened upon a small iron balcony; this door and balcony Ellen esteemed a very particular treasure. With marvellous satisfaction she arranged and arranged her little sanctum till she had all things to her mind, and it only wanted, she thought, a glass of flowers. "I will have that, too, some of these days," she said to herself; and resolved to deserve her pretty room by being very busy there. It was hers alone, open indeed to her friends when they chose to keep her company; but lessons were taken elsewhere, in the library or the music-room, or more frequently her grandmother's dressing-room. Wherever, or whatever, Mrs. Lindsay or Lady Keith was always present.

One day Ellen had a headache and was sent to lie down. Alone, and quietly stretched on her bed, very naturally Ellen's thoughts went back to the last time she had had a headache, *at home*, as she always called it to herself. She recalled with a softened heart the gentle and tender manner of John's care for her; how nicely he had placed her on the sofa; how he sat by her side bathing her temples, or laying his cool hand on her forehead. "I wonder," thought Ellen, "what I ever did to make him love me so much, as I know he does?" She

remembered how, when she was able to listen, he still sat beside her, talking such sweet words of kindness and comfort and amusement, that she almost loved to be sick to have such tending, and looked up at him as at an angel. She felt it all over again. Unfortunately, after she had fallen asleep, Mrs. Lindsay came in to see how she was, and two tears, the last pair of them, were slowly making their way down her cheeks. Her grandmother saw them, and did not rest till she knew the cause. Ellen was extremely sorry to tell, she did her best to get off from it, but she did not know how to evade questions; and those that were put to her indeed admitted of no evasion.

Sunday came; her first Sunday in Edinburgh. All went to church in the morning; in the afternoon Ellen found that nobody was going; her grandmother was lying down. She asked permission to go alone.

"Do you want to go because you think you must? or for pleasure?" said Mrs. Lindsay.

"For pleasure!" said Ellen's tongue, her eyes opening at the same time.

"You may go."

With eager delight Ellen got ready, and was hastening along the hall to the door, when she met Mr. Lindsay.

"Where are you going?"

"To church, sir."

"Alone! What do you want to go for? No, no, I shan't let you. Come in here—I want you with me; you have been once to-day already, haven't you? You do not want to go again."

"I do, indeed, sir, very much," said Ellen, "if you have no objection. You know I have not seen Edinburgh yet."

"Edinburgh! that's true, so you haven't," said he, looking at her discomfited face. "Well, go, if you want to go so much."

Ellen got to the hall door, and farther; she rushed back to the library.

"I did not say right when I said that," she burst forth; "that was not the reason I wanted to go. I will stay, if you wish me, sir."

"I don't wish it," said he in surprise; "I don't know what you mean—I am willing you should go if you like it. Away with you! it is time."

"I was sorry for what I had said to you, sir, just before I went out," said Ellen when she returned.

"What was that? I do not remember anything that deserved to be a cause of grief."

"I told you, sir, when I wanted you to let me go to church, that I hadn't seen Edinburgh yet."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, that wasn't being quite true, and I was sorry for it!"

"Not true? yes it was; what do you mean? you had *not* seen Edinburgh."

"No, sir, but I mean *that* was true, but I said it to make you believe what *wasn't* true."

"How?"

"I meant you to think, sir, that was the reason why I wanted to go to church—to see the city and the new sights, and it wasn't at all."

"What was it then?"

Ellen hesitated.

"I always love to go, and I besides, I believe I wanted to be alone."

"But Ellen, my child, you were troubled without reason; you had said nothing that was false."

"Ah, sir, but I had made you believe what was false."

"Upon my word," said Mr. Lindsay, "you are a nice reasoner. And are you always true upon this close scale?"

"I wish I was, sir, but you see I am not—I am sure I hate everything else!"

"Well, I will not quarrel with you for being true," said Mr. Lindsay.

"I wish there was a little more of it in the world."

For several days after this Mr. Lindsay would hardly permit Ellen to leave him. He made her bring her books and study where he was; he went out and came in with her, and kept her by his side whenever they joined the rest of the family at meals or in the evening. Whether Mr. Lindsay intended it or not, this had soon the effect to abate the displeasure of his mother and sister, who were offended with her for something she had said concerning Alice and John. Ellen was almost taken out of their hands, and they thought it expedient not to let him have the whole of her. And though Ellen could better bear their cold looks and words since she had Mr. Lindsay's favour again, she was very glad when they smiled upon her too, and went dancing about with quite a happy face.

She was now very busy. She had masters for the piano, and singing, and different branches of knowledge; she went to Mr. Muller regularly twice a week; and soon her riding attendance began. She had said no more on the subject, but went quietly, hoping they would find out their mistake before long. Lady Keith always accompanied her.

CHAPTER L.
TRIALS WITHOUT.

ELLEN might now have been in danger of being spoiled, not indeed with overindulgence, for that was not the temper of the family, but from finding herself a person of so much consequence. She could not but feel that in the minds of every one of her three friends she was the object of greatest importance; their thoughts and care were principally occupied with her. Even Lady Kuth was perpetually watching, superintending, and admonishing though she every now and then remarked with a kind of surprise, that "really she scarcely ever had to say anything to Ellen: she thought she must know things by instinct." To Mr. Lindsay and his mother she was the idol of life; and except when by chance her will might cross theirs, she had what she wished and did what she pleased.

But Ellen happily had a safeguard which actually kept her from pride or presumption.

This was the precious hour alone which she had promised John never to lose when she could help it. The only time she could have was the early morning before the rest of the family were up. To this hour, and it was often more than an hour, Ellen was faithful. Her little Bible was extremely precious now, Ellen had never gone to it with a deeper sense of need; and never did she find more comfort in being able to disburden her heart in prayer of its load of cares and wishes. Never more than now had she felt the preciousness of that Friend who draws closer to His children the closer they draw to Him; she had never realised more the joy of having Him to go to. It was her special delight to pray for those loved ones she could do nothing else for; it was a joy to think that He who hears prayer is equally present with all His people, and that though thousands of miles lie between the petitioner and the petitioned for, the breath of prayer may span the distance and pour blessings on the far-off head. The burden of thoughts and affections gathered during the twenty-three hours was laid down in the twenty-fourth; and Ellen could meet her friends at the breakfast-table with a sunshiny face. Little they thought where her heart had been, or where it had got its sunshine.

But notwithstanding this, Ellen had too much to remember and regret than to be otherwise than sober—soberer than her friends liked. They noticed with sorrow that the sunshine wore off as the day rolled on; that though ready to smile upon occasion, her face always settled

again into a gravity they thought altogether unsuitable. Mrs. Lindsay fancied she knew the cause, and resolved to break it up.

From the first of Ellen's coming her grandmother had taken the entire charge of her toilet. Whatever Mrs. Lindsay's notions in general might be as to the propriety of young girls learning to take care of themselves, Ellen was much too precious a plaything to be trusted to any other hands, even her own. At eleven o'clock regularly every day she went to her grandmother's dressing-room for a very elaborate bathing and dressing; though not a very long one, for all Mrs. Lindsay's acts were energetic. Now, without any hint as to the reason, she was directed to come to her grandmother an hour before the breakfast time, to go through then the course of cold water sponging and hair-gloving, that Mrs. Lindsay was accustomed to administer at eleven. Ellen heard in silence, and obeyed, but made up her hour by rising earlier than usual, so as to have it before going to her grandmother. It was a little difficult at first, but she soon got into the habit of it, though the mornings were dark and cold. After a while it chanced that this came to Mrs. Lindsay's ears, and Ellen was told to come to her as soon as she was out of bed in the morning.

"But, grandmother," said Ellen, "I am up a great while before you; I should find you asleep; don't I come soon enough?"

"What do you get up so early for?"

"You know, ma'am, I told you some time ago. I want some time to myself."

"It is not good for you to be up so long before breakfast, and in these cold mornings. Do not rise in future till I send for you."

"But, grandmother, that is the only time for me; there isn't an hour after breakfast that I can have regularly to myself; and I cannot be happy if I do not have some time."

"Let it be as I said," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"Couldn't you let me come to you at eleven o'clock again, ma'am?"

But Mrs. Lindsay silenced her and told her to obey.

She thought a great deal on the subject, and came soberly to the conclusion that it was her duty to disobey. She could not without its coming to the knowledge of her grandmother. A week or rather two after the former conversation, Mrs. Lindsay made enquiries of Mason, her woman, who was obliged to confess that Miss Ellen's light was always burning when she went to call her.

"Ellen," said Mrs. Lindsay, the same day, "have you obeyed me

in what I told you the other morning about lying in bed till you are sent for?"

"No, ma'am."

"You are frank to venture to tell me so. Why have you disobeyed?"

"Because, grandmother, I thought it was right."

"You think it is right to disobey, do you?"

"I think it is right to disobey if I am told to do what is wrong," said Ellen, in a low voice.

"Are you to be the judge of right and wrong?"

"No, ma'am."

"Who, then?"

"The Bible."

"I do not know what is the reason," said Mrs. Lindsay, "that I cannot be very angry with you. Ellen, I repeat the order I gave you the other day. Promise me to obey."

"I cannot, grandmother; I *must* have that hour; I cannot do without it."

"So must I be obeyed, I assure you, Ellen. You will sleep in my room henceforth."

Ellen heard her in despair; she did not know what to do. *Appealing* was not to be thought of. There was, as she said, no time she could count upon after breakfast. Her grandmother's expedient for increasing her cheerfulness had marvellous ill success. Ellen dropped under the sense of wrong, as well as the loss of her greatest comfort. For two days she felt and looked forlorn, and smiling now seemed to be a difficult matter. Mr. Lindsay happened to be remarkably busy those two days, so that he did not know what was going on. At the end of them, however, in the evening, he called Ellen to him, and whisperingly asked what was the matter.

"Nothing, sir," said Ellen, "only grandmother will not let me do something I cannot be happy without doing."

"Is it one of the things you want to do because it is right whether it is convenient or not?" he asked, smiling. Ellen could not smile.

"Oh, father," she whispered, putting her face close to his, "if you would only get grandmother to let me do it!"

The words were spoken with a sob, and Mr. Lindsay felt her warm tears upon his neck. He had, however, far too much respect for his mother to say anything against her proceedings while Ellen was present; he simply answered that she must do whatever her grandmother said. But when Ellen had left the room, which she did immediately, he took the matter up. Mrs. Lindsay explained and insisted

that Ellen was spoiling herself for life and the world by a set of religious notions that were utterly unfit for a child; that she would very soon get over thinking about her habit of morning prayer, and would then do much better. Mr. Lindsay looked grave; but with Ellen's tears yet wet upon his cheek, he could not dismiss the matter so lightly, and persisted in desiring that his mother should give up the point, which she utterly refused to do.

Ellen meanwhile had fled to her own room. The moonlight was quietly streaming in through the casement; it looked to her like an old friend. She threw herself down on the floor, close by the glass, and after some tears, which she could not help shedding, she raised her head and looked thoughtfully out.

The argument which was carried on in the parlour sank at length into silence without coming to any conclusion.

"Where is Miss Ellen?" Mrs. Lindsay asked of a servant that came in.

"She is up in her room, ma'am, singing."

"Tell her I want her."

"No, step," said Mr. Lindsay; "I'll go myself."

Her door was a little ajar, and he softly opened it without disturbing her. Ellen was still sitting on the floor before the window, looking out through it, and in rather a low tone singing the last verse of the hymn "Rock of Ages."

Mr. Lindsay stood still at the door. Ellen paused a minute, and then sang "Jerusalem, my happy home." Her utterance was so distinct that he heard every word. He did not move till she had finished, and then he came softly in.

"Singing songs to the moon, Ellen?"

Ellen started and got up from the floor.

"No, ah; I was singing them to myself."

"Not entirely, for I heard the last one. Why do you make yourself sober singing such sad things?"

"I don't, sir; they are not sad to me; they are delightful. I love them dearly."

"How came you to love them? it is not natural for a child of your age. What do you love them for, my little daughter?"

"I love them because I love to think of the things the hymns are about: I love the tunes, dearly; and I like both the words and the music better, I believe, because I have sung them so often with friends."

"I guessed as much. Isn't that the strongest reason of the kind?"

"I don't know, ah; I don't think it is."

"Hemph," said Mr. Lindsay, "I don't remember at this moment anyone that I think she could resemble without losing more than she gained."

"Oh, it's of no use to talk to you about Ellen, brother! You can take up things fast enough when you find them out, but you never will see with other people's eyes."

"What do your eyes see, Catherine?"

"She is altogether too childish for her years; she is really a baby."

"I don't know," said Mr. Lindsay smiling, "you should ask M. Muller about that. He was holding forth to me for a quarter of an hour the other day, and could not stint in her praises. She will go on, he says, just as fast as he pleases to take her."

"Oh, yes, in intelligence and so on, I know she is not wanting, that is not what I mean."

"If she has any fault," said Mr. Lindsay, "it is want of pride, but I don't know, I can't say I wish she had more of it."

"But she isn't like anybody else. She don't care for young companions; she don't seem to fancy anyone out of the family unless it is old Mrs. Allen, and she is absurd about her. You know she is not very well lately, and Ellen goes to see her I know every day, regularly; and there are the Gordons, and Carpenters, and Murays, and McIntoshes, she sees them continually, but I don't think she takes a great deal of pleasure in their company. The fact is, she is too sober."

"She has as sweet a smile as I ever saw," said Mr. Lindsay, "and as hearty a laugh, when she does laugh, she is none of your gigglers."

"But when she does laugh," said Lady Keith, "it is not when other people do. I think she is generally grave when there is most merriment around her."

"I love to hear her laugh," said Mrs. Lindsay, "it is in such a low sweet tone, and seems to come from the very spring of enjoyment. Yet I must say I think Catherine is half right."

"With half an advocate," said Lady Keith, "I shall not expect much."

Mr. Lindsay uttered a low whistle. At this moment the door opened and Ellen came gravely in, with a book in her hand.

"Come here, Ellen," said Mr. Lindsay, holding out his hand, "here's your aunt says you don't like anybody, how is it? are you of an unsocial disposition?"

Ellen's smile would have been a sufficient apology to him for a much graver fault.

"Anybody but of the house, I meant," said Lady Keith.

"Speak, Ellen, and clear yourself," said Mr. Lindsay. "Whom do you like?"

"I like M. Muller, sir

"Nobody else?"

"Mrs. Allen."

"There!" exclaimed Lady Keith.

"Have you come from her room just now

"Yes, sir."

"What's your fancy for going there?"

"I like to hear her talk, sir, and to read to her; it gives her a great deal of pleasure; and I like to talk to her."

"What do you talk about?"

"She talks to me about my mother—"

"And you?"

"I like to talk to her about old times," said Ellen, changing colour.

"Profitable conversation," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"You will not go to her room any more, Ellen," said Mr. Lindsay.

In great dismay at what Mrs. Allen would think, Ellen began a remonstrance. But only one word was uttered; Mr. Lindsay's hand was upon her lips. He next took the book she still held.

"Is this what you have been reading to her?"

Ellen bowed in answer.

"Who wrote all this?"

Before she could speak he had turned to the front leaf and read, "To my little sister." He quietly put the book in his pocket; and Ellen as quietly left the room.

"I am glad you have said that," said Lady Keith. "You are quick enough when you see anything for yourself, but you never will believe other people."

"There is nothing wrong here," said Mr. Lindsay; "only I will not have her going back to those old recollections she is so fond of. I wish I could make her drink Lettie!"

"What is the book?" asked Mrs. Lindsay.

"I hardly know," said he, turning it over, "except it is from that person that seems to have obtained such an ascendancy over her—it is full of his notes—it is a religious work."

"I wish she had never been detained in America after the time when she should have come to us," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"I wish the woman had what she deserves that kept back the letters," said Mr. Lindsay.

"Yes, indeed," said his sister, "and I have been in continual fear of visit from that very person that you say gave Ellen the book."

"He isn't here," said Mr. Lindsay.

"I don't know where he is; but he was on this side of the water at the time Ellen came on; so she told me."

"I wish he was in Egypt!"

"I don't intend he shall see her if he comes," said Lady Keith, "it, I can possibly prevent it. I gave Portefield orders, if anyone asked for her, to tell me immediately, and not her upon any account, but nobody has come hitherto, and I am in hopes none will."

Mr. Lindsay rose and walked up and down the room with folded arms in a very thoughtful style.

Ellen with some difficulty bore herself as usual throughout the next day and evening, though constantly on the rack to get possession of her book again. It was not spoken of nor hinted at. When another morning came she could stand it no longer; she went soon after breakfast into Mr. Lindsay's study, where he was writing. Ellen came behind him, and laying both her arms over his shoulders, said in his ear—

"Will you let me have my book again, father?"

A kiss was her only answer. Ellen waited.

"Go to the book-ise," said Mr. Lindsay, presently, "or to the book-store, and choose out anything you like, Ellen, instead."

"I wouldn't exchange it for all that is in them," she answered with some warmth, and with the husky feeling coming in her throat. Mr. Lindsay said nothing.

"At any rate," whispered Ellen after a minute, "you will not destroy it, or do anything to it—you will take care of it and let me have it again. won't you, sir?"

"I will try to take care of you, my daughter."

Again Ellen paused; and then came round in front of him to plead, to more purpose.

"I will do anything in the world for you, sir," she said earnestly, "if you will give me my book again."

"You must do anything in the world for me," said he, smiling and pinching her cheek, "without that."

Ellen stood silent, struggling, between the alternate surgings of passion and checks of prudence and conscience. But at last the wave rolled too high and broke. Clapping her hands to her face, she exclaimed, not indeed violently, but with sufficient energy of expression, "Oh, it's not right! it's not right!"

"Go to your room and consider of that," said Mr. Lindsay. "I do not wish to see you again to-day, Ellen."

The day passed and the night came, and she went to bed without being able to make up her mind. Next morning she decided to apologise to Mr. Lindsay and went down to breakfast feeling no resentment towards him.

They were all at the table. But it made no difference. Ellen went straight to Mr. Lindsay, and laying one hand timidly in his, and the other on his shoulder, she at once humbly and frankly confessed that she had spoken as she ought not the day before, and that she was very sorry she had displeased him, and begged his forgiveness. It was instantly granted.

"You are a good child, Ellen," said Mr. Lindsay, as he fondly embraced her.

"Oh, no, sir! don't call me so, I am everything in the world but that."

"Then all the rest of the world are good children. Why didn't you come to me before?"

"Because I couldn't, sir; I felt wrong all day yesterday."

Mr. Lindsay laughed and kissed her, and bade her sit down and eat her breakfast.

Ellen's brow grew somewhat meeker and her smile less bright as the year rolled on. Months flew by and brought her no letters. Ellen marvelled and sorrowed in vain. One day, mourning over it to Mrs. Allen, the good housekeeper asked her if her friends knew her address? Ellen at first said, "To be sure," but after a few minutes' reflection was obliged to confess that she was not certain about it. It would have been just like Mr. Humphreys to lose sight entirely of such a matter, and very natural for her, in her grief and confusion of mind and experience, to be equally forgetful. She wrote immediately to Mr. Humphreys and supplied the defect; and hope brightened again.

Two or three months after the date of her last letter, she received at length one from Mr. Humphreys—a long, very kind, and very wise one. She lived upon it for a good while. Mr. Lindsay's bills were returned. Mr. Humphreys declined utterly to accept them, telling Ellen that he looked upon her as his own child up to the time that her friends took her out of his hands, and that he owed her more than she owed him. Ellen gave the money—she dared not give the whole message—to Mr. Lindsay. The bills were instantly and haughtily re-enclosed, and sent back to America.

Still nothing was heard from Mr. John. Ellen wondered, waited,

readily quieted herself into submission, and as time went on, faster and faster to her Bible and the refuge she found there.

CHAPTER III.

"THOU !"

ONE evening, it was New Year's eve, a large party was expected at Mr. Lindsay's. Ellen was not of an age to go abroad to parties, but at home her father and grandmother never could bear to do without her when they had company. Generally Ellen liked it very much; not called upon to take any active part herself, she had leisure to observe and enjoy in quiet; and often heard music, and often by Mr. Lindsay's side listened to conversation, in which she took great pleasure.

The company were gathered, but it was still early in the evening, when a gentleman came, who declined to enter the drawing-room, and asked for Miss Lindsay.

"Miss Lindsay is engaged."

The stranger wrote a word or two on a card which he drew from his pocket, and desired him to carry it to Miss Ellen. He carried it to Lady Keith.

"What sort of a person, Portersfield?" said Lady Keith, crumpling the paper in her fingers, and withdrawing a little from the company.

"Uncommon fine gentleman, my lady," Portersfield answered in a low tone.

Lady Keith hesitated. Recollecting, however, that she had just left Ellen safe in the nursery room, she made up her mind; and desired Portersfield to show the stranger in. As he entered, unannounced, her eyes unwillingly turned the butler's judgment, and to the enquiry whether he might see Miss Lindsay she answered very politely, though with regrets, that Miss Lindsay was engaged.

"May I be pardoned for asking," said the stranger, with the slightest possible approach to a smile, "whether that decision is imperative? I leave Scotland to-morrow—my reasons for wishing to see Miss Lindsay this evening are urgent."

Lady Keith could hardly believe her ears, or command her countenance to keep company with her expressions of "sorrow that it was impossible—Miss Lindsay could not have the pleasure that evening."

"May I beg then to know at what hour I may hope to see her to-morrow?"

Hastily resolving that Ellen should on the morrow accept, given invitation, Lady Keith answered that she would not be in to she would leave Edinburgh at an early hour.

The stranger bowed and withdrew; that was all the bystanders saw. But Lady Keith, who had winced under an eye that she could not help fancying read her too well, saw that in his parting look which made her uneasy; beckoning a servant who stood near, she ordered him to wait upon that gentleman to the door.

The man obeyed; but the stranger did not take his cloak, and made no motion to go.

"No, sir! not that way," he said sternly, as the servant laid his hand on the lock, "show me to Miss Lindsay."

"Miss Ellen?" said the man, doubtfully, coming back, and thinking from the gentleman's manner that he must have misunderstood Lady Keith. "This way, sir, if you please; what name, sir?"

"No name—stand back!" said the stranger as he entered.

There were a number of people gathered round a lady who was at the piano singing. Ellen was there in the midst of them. The gentleman advanced quietly to the edge of the group, and stood there without being noticed; Ellen's eyes were bent on the floor. Suddenly, from a sudden impulse, she raised them and saw John's smile.

It would not be easy to describe the change in Ellen's face. Lightning strikes as quick and as brilliant an illumination, but lightning does not stay. With a spring she reached him, and seizing both his hands drew him out of the door near which they were standing; and as soon as they were hidden from view threw herself into his arms in an agony of joy. Before, however, either of them could say a word, she caught his hand again, and led him back along the hall to the private staircase; she mounted it rapidly to *her room*; and there again she threw herself into his arms, exclaiming, "Oh, John! my dear John! my dear brother!"

But neither smiles nor words would do for the overcharged heart. The tide of joy ran too strong, and too much swelled from the open sources of love and memory to keep any bounds. And it kept none. Ellen sat down, and bowing her head on the arm of the sofa wept with all the vehement passion of her childhood, quivering from head to foot with convulsive sobbings. John might guess from the outpouring how much her heart had been secretly gathering for months past. For a little while he walked up and down the room; but this excessive agitation he was not willing should continue. He said nothing; sitting down beside Ellen on the sofa, he quietly possessed himself of one of her hands; and

her excitement, the hand struggled to get away again, it was permitted. Ellen understood that very well, and immediately checked herself.

"I thought you never would come, John," she half-whispered. "And I cannot stay now. I must leave you to-morrow, Ellie."

Ellen started and looked up now.

"Leave me! For how long? Where are you going?"

"Home."

"To America!" Ellen's heart died within her. Was *this* the end of all her hopes? did her confidence end *here*? She shed no tears now. He could see that she grew absolutely still from intense feeling.

"What's the matter, Ellie?" said the low gentle tones she so well remembered, "I am leaving you but for a time. I *must* go home now, but if I live you will see me again."

"Oh, I wish I was going with you!" Ellen exclaimed.

"My dear Ellie!" said her brother, in an altered voice, drawing her again to his arms, "you cannot wish it more than I!"

"I never thought you would leave me here, John."

"Neither would I, if I could help it, neither will I a minute longer than I can help, but we must both wait, my own Ellie."

"Wait 'till when?" said Ellen, not a little reassured.

"I have no power now to remove you from your legal guardians, and you have no right to choose for yourself."

"And when shall I?"

"In a few years."

"A few years!" But in the meantime, John, what shall I do without you? If I could see you once in a while, but there is no one here, not a single one to help me to keep right, no one talks to me as you used to; and I am all the while afraid I shall go wrong in something; what shall I do?"

"What the weak must always do, Ellie—seek for strength where it may be had."

"And so I do, John," said Ellen, "but I want *you*, oh, how much!"

"Are you not happy here?"

"Yes, I am happy, at least I thought I was half an hour ago, as happy as I can be. I have everything to make me happy except what would do it."

"We must both have recourse to our old remedy against sorrow and loneliness—you have not forgotten the use of it, Ellie?"

"No, John," said Ellen, meeting his eyes with a tearful smile.

"They love you here, do they not?"

"Very much too much."

"And you love them?"

"Yes."

"That's a doubtful 'yes.'"

"I do love my father very much; and my grandmother too, though not so much. I cannot help loving them; they love me so. But they are so unlike you!"

"That is not much to the purpose, after all," said John smiling.

"There are varieties of excellence in the world."

"Oh, yes, but that isn't what I mean; it isn't a variety of excellence. They make me do everything they have a mind, I don't mean," she added smiling, "that *it* is not like you, but you always had a reason; they are different. My father makes me drink wine every now and then, I don't like to do it, and he knows I do not; and I think that is the reason I have to do it."

"That is not a matter of great importance, I lie, provided they do not make you do something strong."

"They could not do that, I hope, and there is another thing they cannot make me do."

"What is that?"

"Stay here when you will take me away."

There was a few minutes' thoughtful pause on both sides.

"You are grown, Ellen," said John, "you are not the child I left you."

"I don't know," said Ellen, smiling. "It seems to me I am just the same."

"Let me see—look at me!"

She raised her face, and amidst smiles and tears its look was not less clear and frank than his was penetrating. "Just the same," as the verdict of her brother's eyes a moment afterwards. *Ellen's* grew bright as she read it there.

"Why have you never come or written before, John?"

"I did not know where you were. I have not many months until quite lately, and I could not think my father was without it for a long time, sent it to me, the letter mislaid—never read—delays upon delays."

"And when did you get it?"

"I preferred coming to writing."

"And now you must go home so soon!"

"I must, Ellen. My business has lingered."

*Attention
of my lo
selves." for
"What I
yours."*

return. I expect to sail next week. Mrs. Gilles-
with me—her husband stays behind till spring."

He is a friend of a friend of yours whom I met in Switzerland
summer—M. Muller."

M. Muller! did you? Oh, I am very glad! I am very glad you
know him—he is the best friend I have got here, after my father. I
don't know what I should have done without him."

"I have heard him talk of you," said John, smiling.

"He has just come back; he was to be here this evening."

There was a pause again.

"It does not seem right to go home without you, Ellie," said her
brother then. "I think you belong to me more than to anybody."

"That is exactly what I think!" said Ellen, with one of her bright
looks, and then bursting into tears; "I am very glad you think so too!
I will always do whatever you tell me—just as I used to—no matter
what anybody else says."

"Perhaps I shall try you in two or three things, Ellie."

"Will you? In what? Oh, it would make me so happy—so much
happier if I could be doing something to please you. I wish I was at
home with you again!"

"I will bring that about, Ellie, by-and-by, if you make your words
good."

"I shall be happy then," said Ellen, her old confidence standing
stronger than ever—because I know you will if you say so. Though
how you will manage it I cannot conceive. My father and grandmother
and aunt cannot bear to hear me speak of America. I believe they
could be glad if there wasn't such a place in the world. They
not even let me think of it if they could help it; I never dare
say your name, or say a word about old times. They are afraid
of giving anybody, I believe. They want to have me all to them.

Will they say so you then, Ellie, if you leave them to give
me?"

"Not help it," replied Ellen, "they must say what they
and with abundance of energy, and not a few tears, she went
to them, but I had given myself to you a great while ago;
I was his daughter, you called me your little sister—I can't
John, and I don't want to—it doesn't make a bit of differ-
ence were not born so!"

John only rose and began to walk up and down the room,

Ellen soon came to his side, and leaning upon his arm, used to do in past times, walked up and down with him, a.

"What is it you wanted me to do, John?" she said length; "you said 'two or three things.'"

"One is that you keep up a regular and full correspondence with.

"I am very glad that you will let me do that," said Ellen, "that's exactly what I should like, but——"

"What?"

"I am afraid they will not let me."

"I will arrange that."

"Very well," said Ellen, joyously, "then it will do. Oh, it will make me so happy! And you will write to me?"

"Certainly!"

"And I will tell you everything about myself; and you will tell me how I ought to do in all sorts of things; that will be the next best to being with you. And then you will keep me right."

"I won't promise you that, Ellie," said John, smiling; "you must learn to keep yourself right."

"I know you will, though; however you may smile. What next?"

"Read no novels."

"I never do, John. I knew you did not like it, and I have taken good care to keep out of the way of them. If I had, old anybody why, though they would have made me read a dozen."

Her hand was fondly taken in his, as many a time it had been taken of old, and for a long time they paced up and down; the conversation running sometimes in the strain that both loved and Ellen now never heard; sometimes on other matters; such a conversation as these should have lived upon in former days, and now drank in with a delicious eagerness inexpressible.

"And in a few weeks," said Ellen at length, "you will be home, your own dear sitting-room again, and riding on the Black Prince. You will be here! and it will be——"

"It will be empty without you, Ellie! but we have a Fricke sufficient; let us leave Him and be patient. Have you heard of our old friend Mr. Van Brunt?"

"No—what of him?"

"He has come out before the world as a Christian man."

"Has he?"

John took a letter from his pocket and opened it.

"You may see what my father says of him; and what he says to Ellie. He has missed you much."

that she could not see the woods. John told her
read at her leisure.

How all at Ventnor? and how is Mrs. Vawse? and

Mrs. Vawse spends about half her time at my father's.
very glad of that!"

Marshman wrote me to bring you back with me if I could,
id she had a home for you always at Ventnor."

"How kind she is," said Ellen. "How many friends I find every-
where. It seems to me, John, that almost everybody loves me."

That is a singular circumstance! however, I am no exception to
rule, Ellie."

"Oh, I know that," said Ellen laughing. "And Mr. George?"

"Mr. George is well."

"How much I love him!" said Ellen. "How much I would give
to see him. I wish you could tell me about poor Captain and the
townie, but I don't suppose you have heard of them. Oh, when I
think of it all at home, how I want to be there! Oh, John! some-
times lately I have almost thought I should only see you again in
heaven."

"My dear Ellie! I shall see you there, I trust; but if we live we
shall spend our lives here together first. And while we are parted we
will keep as near as possible by praying for and writing to each other.
And what God orders let us quietly submit to."

Ellen had much ado to command herself at the tone of these words
and John's manner, as he clasped her in his arms and kissed her brow.

She strove to keep back a show of feeling that would dis-
might displease him. But the next moment her fluttering

stilled by hearing the few soft words of a prayer that he

heard. It was a prayer for her and for himself, and

as was that they might be kept to see each other

to the words on her heart.

ing?"

at his watch.

shall see you to-morrow!"

u be here?"

v; where else should I be? What time must you set out?"

ot till afternoon, but—how early can I see you?"

as you please. Oh, spend all the time with me you can,

ranged.

"And now, Elise, you must go downstairs a Lindsay."

"To my father!"

For a moment Ellen's face was a compound of expression, instantly acquiesced, however, and went down with her heart, it must be confessed, going very pit-a-pat indeed. She went into the library, which was not this evening thrown open to company, and sent a servant for Mr. Lindsay. While waiting for his coming, Ellen felt as if she had not the fair use of her senses. Was that John Humphreys quietly walking up and down the library?—Mr. Lindsay's library? And was she about to introduce her brother to the person who had forbidden her to mention his name? There was something, however, in Mr. John's figure and air, in his utter coolness, that insensibly restored her spirits. Triumphant confidence in him overcame the fear of Mr. Lindsay, and when he appeared, Ellen with tolerable composure met him, her hand upon John's arm, and said, "Father this is Mr. Humphreys."—*my brother* she dared not add.

"I hope Mr. Lindsay will pardon my giving him his trouble," said she later. "We have one thing in common which should forbid our being strangers to each other. I, at least, was unwilling to leave Scotland without making myself known to Mr. Lindsay."

Mr. Lindsay most devoutly wished the 'thing in common' had been anything else. He bowed, and was "happy to have the pleasure," but evidently neither pleased nor happy. Ellen could see that.

"May I take up five minutes of Mr. Lindsay's time to explain, perhaps to apologise," said John, slightly smiling, "for what I have done?"

A little ashamed, it might be, to have his feeling suspected, Mr. Lindsay instantly granted the request, and politely invited her to come guest to be seated. Obeying a glance from her brother, who she understood, Ellen withdrew to the farther side of the room, where she could not hear what they said. John took up his acquaintance with his family, and briefly gave an account of his touching the benefits by them conferred on her, rather on Ellen herself and setting forth what she had done. Mr. Lindsay could not be unconscious of what his visitor had omitted to hint at, neither could he help making secret admissions to some of the speaker's admissions; and though he might not speak of them happily, yet the slight admission was great, for it might be a great deal more than he had said.

